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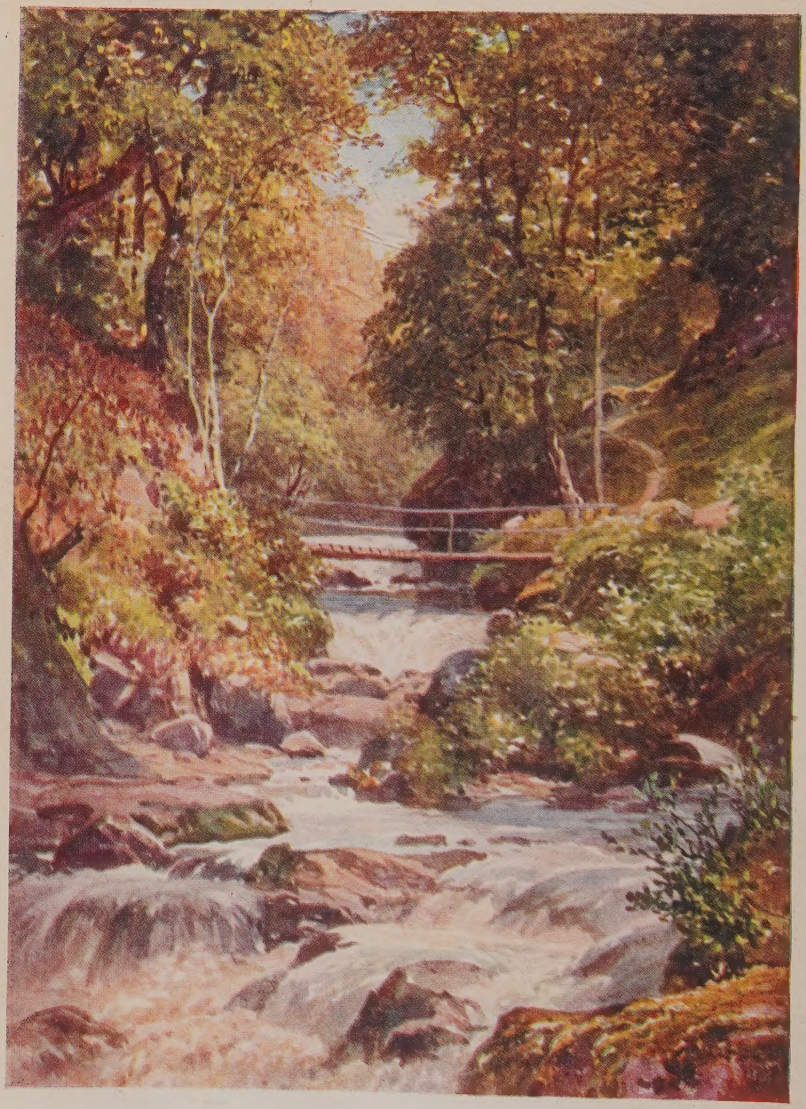

BY WATER'S MEET, LYNMOUTH

DEVON

BY

V·C·CLINTON-BADDELEY

ILLUSTRATED BY

SUTTON PALMER

SECOND EDITION

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Preface

I HAVE attempted in this book to dodge the difficulties which usually attend a general survey. I have selected my discourse arbitrarily: I have barely mentioned some places which are accustomed to command a chapter to themselves from every reputable traveller. I have not digressed on Honiton lace and Devonshire cream. The story of a famous game of bowls remains untold. In excuse for this flaunting of tradition I would plead that Hartland Quay is as interesting in its own way as Plymouth Hoe; and that Branscombe Church has too long given place to repeated descriptions of the greater churches of Devon.

The most of this book is founded upon my own passing impressions; but wherever there have been facts to be detailed, I gratefully acknowledge my debt to such well-known authorities as the Lady Rosalind Northcote ("Devon, its Moorlands, Streams, and Coasts"); Miss Shorto ("The Story of Exeter"); the late Mr. Baring-Gould ("A Book of Devon" and "A Book of Dartmoor"); Mr. Arthur Norway ("Highways and Byways in

Devon and Cornwall"); Mr. F. J. Snell ("Memorials of Old Devonshire"); Mr. R. Pearce Chope ("Farthest from Railways"); to the occasional writings of Miss Gibbon and Dr. Brushfield; to the old writers Prince and Risdon and Leland; and, above all, to the "Transactions of the Devonshire Association."

The lines at the foot of p. 97 are by Mr. W. B. Yeats, and those on p. 151 by Rupert Brooke. The poem "Who?" on p. 123 is here printed by the kind permission of the author, Mr. Walter de la Mare, and of Messrs. Constable and Co., Ltd., the publishers of "The Veil." I am also indebted to Messrs. Methuen and Co., Ltd., for their kind permission to quote, on p. 107, the story of the Wisht Hounds, from Mr. Baring-Gould's "Book of Devon."

V. C. C.-B.

September 23, 1925

In preparing this book for a second impression I have made some omissions, a few additions, and a great many corrections of style, mainly in the first chapter.

V. C. C.-B.

June 11, 1928.

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SKETCH MAP
ACCOMPANYING

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BY

V. C. CLINTON-
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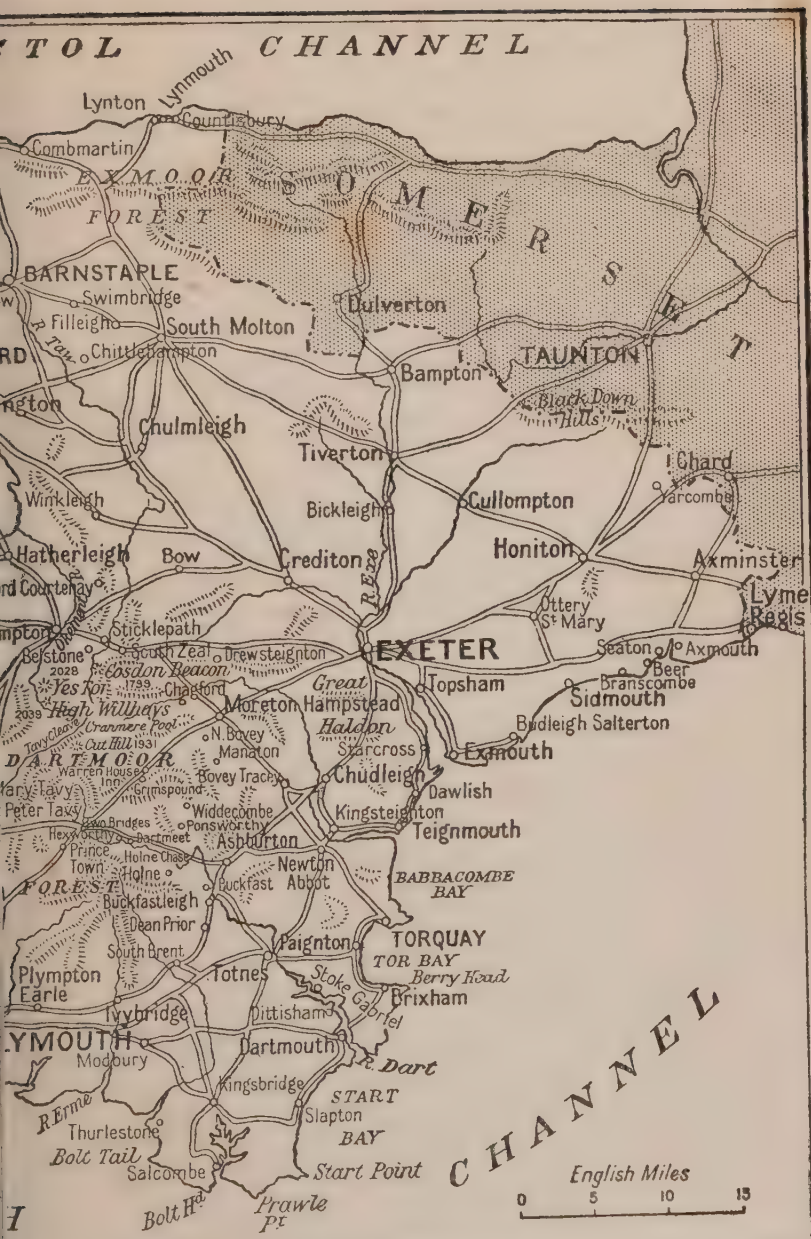

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DEVON

CHAPTER I

THE PEOPLE AND THE CITY

I

Windwhistle Hill, standing between Chard and Crewkerne some seven hundred feet above the sea, is a ridge of great strategic importance, for it commands three counties. To the north Somerset melts away into the marshes and the fens of Sedgemoor. Somewhere in that green distance, twelve miles away, is Athelney, Alfred's hiding-place. North-west, beyond Taunton, are the Quantocks; and much nearer are the Blackdown Hills, where, more than a thousand years ago, Ina, King of the West Saxons, defeated Geraint, the King of Devon. Due south is the borderland of Dorset. South-west the Fosse Way runs across the Devon boundary to Axminster.

It is a remarkable sight to see and understand; for the great ridges are almost coincident with the

county boundary lines. Immediately from the sea at Lyme Regis, the hills start up protecting Axminster; then there is a gap, through which the river and the Fosse Way pass; and then the hills climb on past Yarcombe to the Blackdown range; and after sinking once again, rear up into the gigantic barrier of Exmoor. From sea to sea Devon is protected by an almost unbroken chain of hills.

The eye is not able to grasp, at large, the whole significance of this. Look at it on a coloured contour map; and mark how Dorset is a mingled patch of colours high and low, and Somerset, from Milverton to Castle Cary, is painted meadow-green. But the eastern corner of Devon is marked brown as the Devonshire cattle.

Across the county boundary stands the corkscrew height of Yarcombe Hill, 140 feet higher than Windwhistle, and hemmed in to the north by the greater heights of the Blackdown Hills. From here you do not gaze at Devon from the vantage-ground of a single eminence. You have crossed the River Yarty, and climbed the ridge; and suddenly you are among the hills. Westward and southward ridge follows swiftly upon ridge like the waves of the sea, mounting behind each other in regular formation, and hiding the valleys

and the rivers and the villages. No sign of human habitation scars the hilltops. Only the tufted peak of Dumpdon Hill (four miles away as the crow flies) marks, with its strange umbrella, where the valley of the Otter winds beneath, and where Honiton's broad street lies by the Roman road to Exeter. Eleven miles to the south you can glimpse the Channel at Seaton.

This country was far from the world before the introduction of the railway; and not so many years ago some parts of it approximated to that settlement in America, which yet retains, in isolation, the manners, speech, and costume, of its original colonists. Now the railway follows the outline of the southern cliffs, and every fishing village has grown to be a summer holiday resort. But just as the Romans never conquered the men of Devon, and the Saxons found it easier to absorb than to exterminate them, so this latest invasion has been in reality a failure. The London civilization which now dwells upon the coast goes but skin-deep. A superstructure of golf and tennis enthusiasts has been set upon the soil, but the invaders do not go far beyond their clubs and the railway line. True, they are felling the trees, and covering the cliffs with villas; and many a brook, which babbles past

the cottage gates, has been bridged for the accommodation of motorists, where formerly it flowed incontinently across the highway. These things are. But the common run of people are not in the habit of travelling great distances merely to sit down at last among orchards and green pastures. They seek a better entertainment than these afford, and find it at Paignton and Ilfracombe and Torquay. But venture a mile or two inland, away from the sea and its diversions: you will find little enough changed there. The quiet ancestral villages are standing yet—the thatched cob cottages, with pink fuchsias by the doors, and honeysuckle framing the close little windows; beside the path great clumps of dahlias wagging their brown heads; and over the way the steep-banked hedges, in springtime glittering with primroses. Devon has not yet been greatly changed; and some parts of the county will long defy all efforts to improve them.

NEAR SEATON

II

"Some people may be Rooshans, and others may be Prooshans; they are so born and will please themselves. Them which is of other naturs thinks different." This shrewd pronouncement was made by Mrs. Gamp; and, for all she dwelt in Kingsgate Street, High Holborn, she gave vent to a sentiment typical of the West. With less conciseness but with more lucidity, Charles Kingsley has expressed the same idea. Writing of the country of his birth, he says:* "Wherever I am it always hangs before my imagination as *home*, and I feel myself a stranger and a sojourner in a foreign land the moment I get east of Taunton Dean, on the Mendips." That is the emotion nearest to the heart of all West Countrymen; for their clan-consciousness is second to that of the Highlands only in this—that the West Country people talk less about it. They are so reticent and slow to betray their feelings, you would think sometimes that they did not care, if it were not for the many remarkable evidences of their homing instinct. No West Countryman is easily persuaded to do any-

* "Life and Letters of Charles Kingsley," p. 2.

thing, least of all to move his habitation; and, unless he be a shopkeeper in a seaside resort, he views the presence of "foreigners" in his native village with discomfort and suspicion. Of course, with the spread of education superstitions have dwindled, and new ideas have been suggested to the Western mind; but it is unreasonable to suppose that education will ever eradicate the root instincts of a nature incorrigibly lethargic and independent. Always they prefer their own company; they are intolerant of all external influences; they thinks different. They are civil, good-humoured, and friendly. They would not think of passing a stranger on the road without a greeting. But also they are cautious and retiring. They readily open their doors to the stranger, but they must know him well indeed before they open their hearts.

An innkeeper and his wife ("foreigners" from London, lately imported into the county) were complaining to me one day about this. "I can't understand the men!" said Madam. "And the *lies* they tell!" It was odd that she should not yet have learned to accept their inexactitudes and exaggerations in the spirit in which they are offered. Deceivers they are; but we take that

for granted, and understand, as John Ridd did, that when things are emphatically hawked as gospel truth, they are probably John Fry's biggest romances. The lady ended her complaint with a sniff and these words: "*We're* the only people who give them a free tripe supper anyway." Evidently she had a grievance.

Western prevarication is due rather to a romantic nature than to native dishonesty. They love a good story above all things, and they love to have the monopoly of telling it. Reduced to its lowest terms, it is a theatrical instinct which animates them. As a matter of fact they possess a great latent talent for the real stage; and this accomplishment wells up and declares itself in the acting of every little domestic drama. Fortunately life is replete with tragedy, and this is deeply appreciated in the West. There are plenty of them who would not dream of missing the emotional debauch of a funeral. I know one old soul who goes to all of them as a matter of course—indifferent whether she knows the late departed or no—a habit which encourages a delectable perception of her own importance. Not long ago a girl in our village was taken very seriously ill. The mother was one who was never seen in the village as a rule, but

now she would be up and down the street three and four times a day, engaged on the delicious pursuit of collecting condolences and delivering tragic bulletins. But the girl recovered, and the mother's hour was over. We do not meet her now.

Engendered perhaps by this undeveloped sense of the theatre, is a peculiar trait which marks all the people of Devon. On the whole their characters are just baldly amoral, but they endeavour to conceal this fact beneath a cloud of pruderies. They are, in an amusing sort of way, hypocrites. Folk of the slenderest reputations are always the most shocked by each frequent village delinquency; and a family is often riven because some member has committed a moral fault not among those the others are in the habit of condoning. There is a certain amount of unbelief; but there is a great deal more of sanctimonious self-satisfaction and faith in a heavenly insurance based on the barest possible premium.

Their cardinal virtue is their good-humour. They do not possess a gift for wit of the highest class; they are not quick in the uptake, nor does their wit sparkle. But they are exceedingly ready to enjoy every opportunity for laughter; and much

that is humour of a primitive character passes with everybody as true wit because of the infectious enthusiasm with which the joke is cracked and acclaimed. The spirit of their humour is whole-hearted, and that makes it often more successful than the cynicism of more tutored epigrammatists. I travelled to Exeter recently with an old couple who had come fifteen miles or more to the city. As we neared Exeter it began to rain, and the following conversation was exchanged: "We'm in for dirty weather, mother. Us 'ad better go back again." "There! I told 'ee to bring a coat, an' you said it wouldn' rain." "Oh well, I shall be all right; p'raps someone'll give me one." Now, as badinage goes, this is poor, and on paper even tedious—but both the old souls were busting themselves with laughter, and because of their innocent heartiness it was funny enough to amuse a whole carriage-load of friends and strangers. And all because he said "p'raps someone'll give me one." Behold a mystery.

I have occasionally met West Countrymen endowed with a gift for fine irony, but in most of them their wit consists in hitting the nail on the head with some adroitness, and in strangely chosen words. The unexpectedness of a Devonshire reply

surprises and delights a stranger. But it is also essential to the construction of their humour, and delights themselves as well. Thus we have begotten such rich sayings as "newsbagging"—a pretty phrase for gossiping. "I'm not so green as I'm cabbage-looking" is a startling graft on the old theme, "I'm not so black as I'm painted"; and metaphor can hardly produce anything more peculiar than "fine 'nuff to split 'arf-a-crown," as applied to the weather. Other instances of vivid Western phraseology are, "bright's a button," "neat as ninepence," "so black's a bag," and so on. It is true that these phrases are often heard beyond the confines of the county; but whereas they are used as occasional metaphor in other parts of England, in the West they are the common coin of conversation. A good thing spreads; but I hardly believe that east of Taunton you would hear "so bright's a button" applied to a newborn babe.

Many of the words of the dialect, which is fast dying out, are directly traceable, of course, to far Anglo-Saxon sources. But many, again, are instances of their type of humour. Terms like "all of a quirk" for wriggling; and "flitters" and "flittereens" for small pieces; and "slotter" for

slush; and "stogged" for stuck in the mud; and "snoodle" for snivel; and that fine term "rory-tory," meaning showy; words like these are either invented, or else deliberately adapted from parent words and improved upon. The Devon people have a genius for extracting the best out of language. As occasion demanded they have expressed their feelings onomatopœically in the letters which fitted the occasion best, and which have always been one better than the normal English.

You can still observe the manner in which such terms must have grown. A West Countryman, placed in a sudden dilemma, will often produce from the depths of his soul some extraordinary variation of language which expresses the emotion of the moment. A man describing the excitements of an epileptic fit, for instance, would easily adapt from "all of a quirk" some such expressive monstrosity as "all of a quiggle-quoggle." It is in the blood. I remember hearing a little girl revile her elder brother as "a gurt clogger." They were playing hopscotch with a slab of china instead of a stone. She thought him too rough with his feet, and adapting freely, as I suppose, from "clog" and "clod-hopper" she produced this novel abuse. At any rate I

have not found it in the catalogue of Devonshire Provincialisms, and folk living in the same village have told me they have never heard the word before. They will also rearrange a word to suit their tongues: thus "red" becomes "erd" and "running" "urnning."

"Zounds and Zuggers" is an oath now lamentably silent in Devon; but it reminds one of their peculiar fondness for jingles and alliterations. Alliteration is, of course, the basis of "bright's a button," and the kindred sayings already mentioned. They are equally fond of jingled assonances.

> There be the müne;
> Us can't get tü'n,

is perhaps a philosophical utterance. The most of their verses are less sensible; and yet, as spoken by the people, they become amusing because of their lively telling and insinuating applications. Moreover, the Devonshire accent is a beautiful thing, and they talk with a vivacity which imparts significance to everything.

The true Devonshire humour depends so much on the charm of the Devonshire humorist, that it cannot fail to be sadly damaged by transcription to paper. It is too effervescent and hearty for sober examination. It must be heard to be enjoyed, and

CLOVELLY

there is no phonetic signification that I know which conveys in any way the charm of the lilt of their voices, employing as a rule an upward scale, starting low and reaching high, with any number of climaxes.

The Devonshire "u" is something more than the French "u," with which it is said to be identical. It has a throb in it like the music of a plucked string. But does the sign "yü" (for "you") really convey anything to those who have not heard the dialect spoken? Or, again, does the writing of a double vowel produce anything but an ugly picture on the printed page? "Wrāang" is the only phonetic way of showing the Devonshire pronunciation of "wrong." But it can only convey the truth to those who know Devon, and therefore understand without the soul-destroying expedient of phonetics.

The language they use may be grotesque and prolix, but it is admirably pertinent. Observe the portmanteau qualities of "up-over" and "down-over." If I say I am going to climb the hill, you are still uncertain where I shall go when I get there; but "up-over" means precisely what it says, and deliberately goes one further than the normal phrase "up-along" or "down-along."

Plurals are very complex. "Textes" (in two syllables) is the normal plural of "text"; but it easily becomes "texteses"; and there seems no logical limit to what it might become. "Nestes" is a similar use. The final "ed" of the perfect form makes another favourite excuse for harmonious prolixities, and they cling to it whenever the verb is in fact irregular. Thus "know'd" and "come'd" are always used; and "litted," in two syllables, is the perfect of "light." "Hurted" is another attractive and peculiarly expressive form.

These prolixities are a very important characteristic of the speech. Their reason is to be found in a constant endeavour to soften and ease the course of language. "Textes" is demonstrably easier to say than the intricate explosions of "texts." Or take that fine word "drounded." They are not prepared to say "drownd"; the perfect they understand would be "drowned," as in poetry. But this is not easy to say, so they insert a euphonious "d," and thereby construct a double perfect. Their violence is justified by the result. "Drounded" possesses a dramatic significance that "drownd" can never convey.

Many other words are elongated on the same principle. So "wasp" becomes "wopse," and the

insertion of an "a" between discordant consonants is very common. "To" is always substituted for "at," whether it be in such a phrase as "he lives to Exeter," or idiomatically in "all to once."

The use of "anybody" for "I" or "one" is another pleasing trick. A cook of ours who was particularly anxious to make whortleberry jam, commenced her argument with the insinuating remark: "I always think it's so nice for anybody to make somebody's jam." That is suggestion carried to the uttermost limits of inoffensiveness.

Like true artists the Devon people are not interested in the correct pronunciation or significance of a word; it is something to be re-adapted to their uses. But too many stories of alleged Western humour have been based upon this slothfulness, this truculent independence of thought; for Devonshire remarks are often funny enough without intent, and collectors of anecdotes are altogether too fond of cataloguing these as examples of Devonshire humour. Humour the West Countryman has—of a very friendly, cheerful, precise nature; but the stories usually told about him are indications only of the indolence of his mind. On the other hand he is witty enough to laugh at himself, and Devon-

shire malapropisms are nowhere so much appreciated as in Devon itself.

"Rich folks may ride on camels, but it an't so easy for 'em to see out of a needle's eye. That is my comfort, and I hope I knows it." Surely Mrs. Gamp was no true cockney. Hers was not the gimlet wit of Susan Nipper or Sam Weller. Her nature had something of the mental lethargy of the West. I once heard an old soul in the South reflecting in terms almost identical with Mrs. Gamp's stupendous dictum. But call it not humour; it was spoken with some acerbity and the rudiments of a sneer. Again, "heart-rendering" is a pleasant instance of the slipshod weakness and the natural desire to make the word easier to use.

These things are often very funny, but they are not humour. Nor, because it is obvious, does that fact the less require recognition, for these tales too frequently obscure an understanding of the proper Devonshire humour.

I like this story. A lady was talking to a Dartmoor woman, who had a piano of a well-known make in her room. "Ah! I see you have a Chappell piano," she said. "Yes, mum," was the answer, "but 'er plays church müsic tü." That is Devonshire innocence. And "with all due

AXMOUTH

indifference to what you are saying . . ."—that is Devonshire perversity. Devonshire humour has a very different flavour. It is neat and crisp and sly, with quaint nut-shell commentaries. "Well, 'tiz as 'tiz, an' yü can't make it no 'tizzer." Certainly you could not make it more expressive. That is their genius.

III

Here is a people still living in comparative isolation—at least little troubled as yet with the cold arguments of cities and factories. You would expect to find superstitions lingering here. They do linger—in all sorts of little inhibitions and rules of conduct. Kittens born in May bring snakes into the house, if kept. It is good luck to kill the first butterfly you see. If you wash clothes on New Year's Day, you will wash someone out of the house who will not return. If you buy a brush in May, you will sweep one of the family away.* If you hold a dog or cat by the paw it cannot bite, as all its energy goes into the paw. The toad is essentially diabolically possessed, and should always be killed, and preferably burned. It is unfortunate indeed should one enter the house. The victim of such a misfortune must immediately harness his horse, leaving the reins loose. Wherever the horse stops is the origin of the curse, and the owner of the nearest house must be requested to remove the spell.

* Compare with these last two rules the old theatrical superstition that, if an actor whistles in the dressing-rooms, the person nearest the door will be whistled out of his part.

Countless other odd sayings there are, and quasi-beliefs without number. These adages are not now generally credited, but they are remembered; and, doubtless, in the more remote parishes they are practised. I know a middle-aged woman in one of the least backward towns in Devon, who firmly believes that the mooing of a cow is the presage of death. This makes life very difficult for her.

At one time a belief in black and white magic was part of everybody's creed; and not long ago the old professions were still to be found in the West. At the seaside resorts of the southern coast such superstitions have now been long defunct; and you might tramp the length and breadth of the county and still find no evidence of them. But, nevertheless, witchcraft is still believed in. Naturally you do not come across it often—partly because its practice is becoming more and more restricted; partly because magic is not a thing for which one has occasion every day; partly because the people are reticent and shy of mentioning it.

Magic is of two sorts—black and white. Black magic is evil; white magic does good—usually in the way of *undoing* the spells of black magic. Thus, as a rule, we hear of the two together; for,

when a case of alleged witchcraft comes to light, it is usually because the victim appeals to a white witch to free him from the charms of the "ill-wisher." A black witch—a person entirely given up to the propagation of evil—is not often heard of in these days. One hears, rather, of persons who in specific cases have "overlooked" their neighbours. With these distressing contingencies the white witch battles, and is endowed as well with a power for healing illness, both by spells (based often on Christian invocations) and by herbal medicines.

In 1895 and 1900, in two North Devon parishes, "witches' bottles" were discovered buried in the churchyards. One contained an inky fluid; the corks of both were covered with pins and spines from a thorn-bush. It is agreed that they were a spell, wrought in revenge against a witch by one who believed himself "overlooked." In both instances it is stated that the bottle was comparatively modern; and the vicar of one of the parishes wrote, saying that witchcraft "has not yet, strange to say, entirely died out in this parish."*

In August, 1902, labourers on a farm near Hatherleigh discovered a bullock's heart, tied up under the roof of an outhouse. It was stuck all

* See the "Transactions of the Devonshire Association," vol. xxviii., p. 98, and vol. xxxii., p. 89.

over with quantities of pins and black thorns. This is an accepted spell against witches. The pins and thorns are supposed to discomfort the people who have witched the farmer and his cattle.*

In May, 1903, a particularly interesting prosecution was held at Exeter. A witch-doctor was charged with obtaining money under false pretences. He was a white witch, and engaged only in the raising of spells and the herbal business. He had taken advantage of his position, however, to exact high fees, and had caused great local discomfort by his alarming diagnoses and prescriptions. He was fined £100—a sum he was quite able to pay if he wished to avoid imprisonment, for an examination of his books showed that he was clearing £300 a year by his business. The greater part of that sum was probably derived from his milder profession of herbalist; but, in any case, it is particularly good evidence of the existence of alleged witchcraft in 1903, and the desire for an antidote. And it must be remembered that this unfortunate white witch would not be the only one in practice. If you multiply his profits by only three or four, it indicates a fairly widespread anxiety for their services.†

* *Ibid.*, vol. xxxv., p. 136.

† *Ibid.*, vol. xxxv., p. 137.

The same year a curious discovery was made near Postbridge of two large coils of human hair, buried at the bottom of an accommodating kistvaen. The possession of some genuine part of the victim, such as hair or nails, has always been of special value to the witch. The belief holds in Italy, and also in the South Seas. The intention is that, as the hair is buried, so shall the owner pine away and die.* And it is common knowledge that, at any rate among primitive peoples, the victims do pine away—so great is the power of suggestion when aided by fear and the knowledge of evil. This fact was made use of not long ago in the spectacular drama, "The Bird of Paradise."

"The Transactions of the Devonshire Association for 1907" contain a number of witchcraft reports. A witch at Countisbury cursed a Porlock man, with the hope that he and his horse would break their necks—the which they promptly did on Porlock Hill. The same lady one day drove a new nail into the footprint of a man who was walking in the churchyard. Until it was removed he was unable to leave the yard. As I read this story, I was suddenly reminded of a witchcraft tale I was told by a Devonshire servant-girl, when I was far too

* *Ibid.*, vol. xxxv., p. 139.

young to hear such things. A pair of lovers offended a witch, and she ill-wished them so that they never met again. Whenever they walked to meet each other there came a moment when neither could go forward any further. I can remember now exactly where I was as the horrible legend was unfolded, and how she frightened and puzzled me by insisting that the story was really true. I see now that it *was* really true—or, rather, that she believed it to be so—which is just as good an argument for my present purpose.

Early in this century a youth living in a village three miles over the Somerset border, near Dulverton, was ill-wished by a witch from Exeter. He took to his bed the day she cursed him, and never crossed the doorstep again, dying a year later. The doctor could do nothing with him at all.

In October, 1924, a farm in a village close to Okehampton was found to be "ill-wished." The cattle sickened and died, and it was said that when once the farmer's wife sat down in her chair she was unable to get up again; which was unpleasant. They sent for a white witch from Exeter. He said at once that the farm had been ill-wished by a woman—it is interesting to note that the farmer had quarrelled with his sister shortly before the

calamity—and indicated the place where she had stood when she cast the spell. He then adjusted the difficulty, though I know not by what incantations.

In November, 1924, I was shown in a Dartmoor village the house of a family who had been ill-wished by one who is now dead. Everyone agreed that the family was subject to ceaseless misfortunes.

In the same village lives a cousin of mine who was recently ill. Her servant did not hesitate to say her mistress had been ill-wished—and boldly declared the name of the person who had done it (a likely witch I must agree). This maid had but recently returned to her native Devon, but though she had lived many years in London and other enlightened places, she had not forgotten her early beliefs, and earnestly desired to take my cousin's handkerchief to a white witch in Exeter. That was in the summer of 1925. About the same time she was heard entreating the cat one day: "Thomas, you go out and kill that wicked little bird there." Ordinarily Eliza was a humane creature, but she had a reason for this ferocity. "Oh, Miss," she said, "it's a weeping robin. I don't like to hear it. Last time I heard it, it was my son died." Birds have been taken for super-

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natural prognosticators since the time of Noah. Eliza knew how right those ancients were. The bird was piping a curious continuous sob, quite unlike the normal song of the robin. "It's either for you or for me he's come," she said dejectedly.

Finally, in December, 1924, the obstinacy of West Country beliefs was proclaimed to the world by a paragraph in the *Daily Mail* (and, I daresay, in other London papers). A man had been summoned at Cullompton for assaulting his neighbour with a pin, an offence which he readily admitted, "and declared that the woman had ill-wished him and bewitched his pig. He said he considered the police should raid her house and confiscate a crystal she possessed.

"The magistrates tried to persuade him that there was no such thing as witchcraft, but he persisted in his belief."*

No one would deny that witchcraft is moribund, but belief in it is clearly not yet dead. Nor is there any reason why the belief should die. The exposure of quack fortune-tellers in Bond Street, and of charlatan spiritualists in New York, has never, among reasonable people, invalidated the

* *Daily Mail*, December 9, 1924. The *Western Morning News* of the same date has an almost identical report.

proven fact that spiritual phenomena have been witnessed, that there are such things as haunted houses, that telepathy and mesmerism are potent and genuine forces. Besides, everyone has his story of the remarkably true fortune that was told him in Cairo, or Calcutta, or Thibet. "Of course, I don't really believe it"—I heard them saying it in chorus—"but still it *is* odd. . . ." Ostriches! It is always the same story. Ghosts, and spiritualism, and witchcraft are unpleasant; and so, in the face of overwhelming evidences, man denies their truth and puts it down to beefsteak and onions. Is it reasonable for the Christian to regard the law of the Old and New Testaments as a law to themselves? If these are false, religion is a farce; but if they are true, how can the believer blind himself to the lesson of Saul at Endor, and of Simon, the converted sorcerer? Many good Christians think they are acting soundly when they refuse to believe in magic of any kind. They are wrong. Neither the law of the Jews, nor the teaching of the Church, has ever declared witchcraft to be non-existent. They have both stigmatized it as ungodly, as trafficking with the Devil—a very different judgment, and an implicit acknowledgment. Were there not at Ephesus "many of them also which

used curious arts"? And is it becoming even for the atheist to scoff so loudly at these things, when he and his scientific friends are daily discovering the existence of a Nature not necessarily benignant? When a yokel believes himself to be "overlooked," ninety-nine times out of a hundred he is suffering only from the bad luck which is everybody's curse. But let not this comforting reflection lead us to blink the simple truth that a belief in the power of Evil is as reasonable as a belief in the power of Good. To teach that witchcraft *cannot* exist is an obstinate doctrine begotten of that bombastic self-confidence which is really fear. Probably the countryman at Cullompton had never been within miles of a spell, but the general belief to which he so stoutly adhered was one which many Bishops would have endorsed. Only the Bishops would have resisted witchcraft with the spirit—not with hat-pins.

IV

A white witch is greatly valued for his efficacy against the machinations of evil. But more commonly he is engaged in the curing of homely diseases. Doctors in practice in the remoter parts of the county have many strange tales to tell. A man came to an Okehampton physician with a "breaking out" on his face. An ointment was prescribed; but the patient refused to use it on the ground that there was a full moon. He frankly preferred to rely on prehistoric prejudices; and many of his fellows would do the same any day. Another doctor I knew once found a boy at Belstone standing on his head in a stream. He had been put there as a remedy for thrush. This, though the details vary, is a common prescription. One version orders that the child be taken three mornings to a stream and a green rush drawn through his mouth. Another advocates a thread twined on the child's hand, which must be washed away by water running east.

Whooping-cough may be cured by riding or walking fasting into three parishes; and there is special virtue in a woman who has married without

changing her name. The breath of sheep is also good medicinally; and you *can't* get whooping-cough after May anyway. To cure warts you must steal a piece of bacon, and strike the warts with it, and bury it. As it decays so will the warts disappear. And for boils, crawl backwards round a thorn-bush three times in the early morning.

Prescriptions of this nature have doubtless been handed down in families for generations, and improved upon as the years passed by. A white witch would also direct these remedies; but his business goes further and deeper, consisting very largely of pious charms. Some of these are very pleasant.

For a thorn in the flesh: "Our Savour Christ was Prick with thorns, Never Rankled Never fustered, No more shant thine, —— ——. Out of the Bone into the fleash, out of the fleash into the skin, out of the skin into the Earth, in the Name of the father, etc., etc. Amen."*

For stanching blood: "Christ was born in Bethlehem, baptized with the water of the River of Jordan.

* "Transactions of the Devonshire Association," vol. xxvii., p. 66.

The water was wild and rude,
The Child was meek and good;
God spake, and the water stood
And so shall thy blood.
In the Name, etc."

For toothache: "As Peter sat by the gate of Jerusalem weeping, Jesus said, 'What aileth thee, Peter?' Peter said, 'Lord, Lord, sore pain troubleth me in the teeth.' Jesus said, 'Arise, Peter, and follow Me.' Peter arose and followed Him, and the pain in the teeth left, and Peter said, 'Grant, Lord, that whoever hath these words in memory or in writing may never be troubled with the pain in the teeth.' In the Name, etc."*

The words, "Sinner, Jesus died for thee. Therefore flee that sin," written on bits of paper, and carried in a bag round the neck, have been used as a cure for fits. And there are very many similar prescriptions.

When people write to the papers about these old charms, they have always guarded themselves, in the past, from any imputation of a belief in them. In these days, when Faith Healing has thrust itself upon the attention of the world, one is reminded

* *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 91. There are many alternative versions.

of these Western creeds, so lovingly adhered to through so many years. The heretical persuasion that every miracle has a natural explanation was never held by these simple people; and if their charms were uttered in a spirit of piety they are not less worthy of respect than the more learned invocations of the Faith Healer. No doubt they have been babbled often enough as superstitious formulæ, but originally they were pious in intention.

Here, finally, is a very strange tale (not of Devon, but of a neighbouring town in Dorset), which was told me on unimpeachable authority: A white witch was called in to prescribe for warts. He did not look at the patient's hands, but asked her only to tell him the number of her afflictions. Time passed, and the warts grew no better; so the patient went again to the white witch. He was greatly surprised, and said that the warts must have been wrongly counted. The patient counted again and found that she had made a mistake. Again the man asked only for the number, and shortly afterwards the warts entirely disappeared, after having been so virulent that the sufferer could hardly be persuaded to use her hands in public.

"So I leave a matter that I do not understand,"

as Stevenson said, when he was cured of a cold by a South Sea mesmerist. Stevenson was not usually so humble. He would have liked, I think, to prove what nonsense it all was; but, in the face of facts, he was driven to the grudging confession that there are things in the world for which we cannot always account.

THE TORRIDGE, TORRINGTON

V

The other day I heard a commercial traveller complain that the Devonshire motto was—"Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow." He was disgruntled. It is rather, "Don't bother us with novel contraptions which don't really matter." The people of Devon are acute enough when they like, but they are not going to put themselves out to please commercial travellers or anybody else. It may be that they are slow; I will not deny it. Yet they are not unlike the traditional John Bull—always asleep according to the critics, but always awake when the crisis comes.

I need not tell again the stories of Hawkins and Frobisher, Gilbert and Grenville and Drake; or of Raleigh, renowned for his works, and more truly valued for his thoughts. These pirates and courtiers, who humbled Spain and first conceived the British Empire, are the theme of all Elizabethan histories. Since their date there have been many other Devonians wakeful at the time of crisis. George Monk, Duke of Albemarle, who overthrew the Commonwealth in 1660, was born at Torrington. At the greater crisis of 1688, the

successful landing of the Prince of Orange took place at Brixham, and deeply involved the county in a revolution which marked an epoch. The hero of the wars which followed was the Duke of Marlborough, born at Ashe, near Axminster, in 1650. In the great political struggles at the beginning of George III.'s reign, it was Dunning of Ashburton who moved, and carried, the famous resolution of 1780, "that the Power of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished."

These are the most spectacular of the Devon worthies. In the gentler walks of life there are as many more. Sir Joshua Reynolds was born at Plympton, and Turner at Barnstaple. Kingsley was born at Holne; Froude at Dartington; John Gay at Barnstaple; Coleridge at Ottery St. Mary; and near to the same town (that nothing might be lacking) Joanna Southcott was born to us in 1750.

Who else? Lawyer Bracton, and Sir Thomas Bodley (honoured as a Devonian, despite his connivance with the Dean of Exeter to rob the Cathedral library for the benefit of the new collection at Oxford); and that choir of theologians, St. Boniface and Jack Russell, Hooker and Jewel and Temple. Samuel Wesley was at one time head-

master of Blundell's; and for many years Robert Herrick was vicar of Dean Prior. And then there are the Russells, the Seymours, the Courtenays; Maria Foote, Cosway, William Browne, Sir Redvers Buller, Carew the King of the Gypsies, and Jack Rattenbury, the most amusing smuggler of his age.

These and many others are names which are for ever preserved in history. But probably more than any other county, Devon owes her homage to unnamed heroes. Elizabeth gave to Exeter the motto *Semper Fidelis* in recognition of the three ships sent by the city against the Spanish Armada. But *Semper Fidelis* stood then, and has stood since, for greater sacrifices than these.

No English city has been so often beleaguered as Exeter. It had been besieged many times before the Norman Conquest. Twice Alfred chivied the Danes from Exeter, and twice they attacked the city in the reign of Ethelred the Unready. The second time, in 1003, aided by treachery, they were successful, and Exeter was sacked and ravaged. William the Conqueror besieged Exeter for eighteen days, and, when at length he was admitted, it was on terms. This

must have taught him the immense strategic importance of the Western Capital; and, building on the site where English, Romans, and Britons, had built before him, he erected the great castle of Rougemont, part of whose walls are standing to this day. He also repaired and strengthened the walls of the city, which the Romans had built six or seven hundred years before him.

For many centuries Exeter was to be a key to the strategy of many wars.

In 1140 the Governor of the Castle, Baldwin, Earl of Devon, declared for Queen Maud against Stephen. The citizens stood for the King, and Stephen himself came to reduce the Castle garrison.

In 1470 Warwick and Clarence fled to Exeter, hotly pursued by Edward IV. When the King left Exeter he presented the city with his own sword, to this day preserved at the Guild Hall.

The West was very properly concerned in the opposition to Richard III. He came himself to Exeter and outlawed several hundred persons including the Bishop and the Dean.

In 1497 the city was besieged by Perkin Warbeck. Twice the rebels forced their way in, once at the North Gate and once at the East Gate.

ON THE CANAL NEAR EXETER

CENTRAL REFERENCE LIBRARY

Each time they were driven back. Soon after, Henry VII. came to Exeter to thank the people and to judge the prisoners, and he, too, gave his sword to the City, and the cap of maintenance, both of which are still borne before the Mayor when he goes in procession to the Cathedral.

Scarcely fifty years had passed before Exeter was again besieged. Whit Sunday, 1549, was the day decreed for the inaugural service of King Edward VI.'s new prayer book. In Devon and Cornwall there was vast dissatisfaction, the Cornishmen very reasonably complaining that they knew no more of English than they did of Latin. On Whit Monday the priest of Sampford Courtenay, near Okehampton, was constrained by his parishioners to put on his old familiar vestments, and to say the service he had been forced to omit on the previous day. This was the genesis of insurrection. A magistrate who protested at the insubordination was killed; enthusiasm was whetted; and the rebels marched upon Exeter. On the religious point at issue the city was not unsympathetic with the insurrection, but the Mayor was not prepared to sacrifice the honour of Exeter by joining a disloyal movement which was little likely to succeed. The gates were shut, and a long and painful siege

followed, which was at length raised by Lord Russell. In the executions and punishments which followed the suppression of the revolt, the Vicar of St. Thomas' was chosen for an example. He was hung in his vestments on the top of the tower of his own church, and there left dangling for all Exeter to see.

When the Civil War began Exeter was first held for the Parliament; but this was because the Parliament's Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Bedford, was first in the field. The people were for the King, and soon Prince Maurice captured the city; and, shortly after, the Queen was sent to Exeter, where she lived at Bedford House, whose site was in the middle of the eastern side of the modern Bedford Circus. Here the Princess Henrietta Maria was born, and in the Cathedral is the font, decorated with fat Caroline cherubs, which was used for the first time at the baby's christening. Later King Charles came also, and with him the future Charles II. At the Restoration Exeter was presented with a picture of the Princess painted by Lely. It hangs in the Guild Hall; and opposite is one, by the same painter, of General Monk, who engineered the Restoration.

After Monmouth's rebellion, Judge Jefferies held

his Bloody Assize at Exeter; and not long after that came William of Orange. There is a cruel tale of his landing, which is irresistible. It is written in the journal of a chaplain to the invading army, and thus it runs:

"At the upper end of Torbay there is a fair House, belonging to one Mr. Carey, a very rigid Papist, who entertained a Priest in his House. This Priest going to recreate himself on the Leads, on the top thereof, it being a most delightsome day, as he was walking there he happened to cast his Eyes towards the Sea, and espying the Fleet at a distance, withal being purblind in his Eyes, as well as blinded by Satan in his mind, he presently concludes that 'twas the French Navy (because he saw divers White Flags) come to land the Sons of Belial, which should cut off the Children of God, or as they call us, the Hereticks. And being transported with joy, he hastened to inform his own Disciples of the House, and forthwith they sung *Te Deum*." The which, as our chaplain comments, was "a grand Mistake."

He gives a pleasant picture, too, of the welcome that they got from the loyal county. "Divers of the Dutchmen being unaccustomed to such bad ways and hard marching in the Dirt, wished them-

selves back in their own Country, and murmured because of the Dark and Rain." And again he complains, "The Place where we encamped was trodden to Dirt, and stuck to our Shoes wretchedly." Nor did the people of Exeter afford the usurper any warmer welcome, until it was clear at last that the cause of the King was hopeless. As it was, the Mayor imprisoned William's herald, and closed the gates against Lord Mordaunt with the vanguard of the invading army; the Bishop fled to warn King James, the Dean would not compromise himself by meeting the Prince, and the Canons refused to take their places at the *Te Deum* service. William stayed many days at Exeter before the county acquiesced in the inevitable.

The few crises here enumerated indicate in some fashion the immense importance of the Western Capital. *Semper Fidelis* was a motto well earned; yet I think there may have been guile, as well as gratitude, in the Crown that gave it. The loyalty of Exeter has always been in fact essential to the security of the throne. That is why the two conquering Williams made haste to secure it; and why so great a company of Kings have thought it worth their while to win the city's friendship.

EXETER

Edward I. held a Parliament at Exeter; and poor Henry VI. stayed at the Bishop's Palace for nearly a fortnight. Henry VIII. created Exeter a County in itself—the supremest privilege to which a city can attain.

That Exeter, historically, is the most interesting city of this realm is no extravagant belief. "Others can boast of a fuller share of modern greatness; none other can trace up a life so unbroken to so remote a past."* From the British town to the Roman fortress, the Anglo-Norman stronghold, the English city, and back to the peace of a neo-British county capital—the story of her evolution is complete throughout. And you may read that story without raking among fusty documents. Exeter tells it you herself.

When streets are cut, and houses grow up around them, it is extraordinary how completely one loses one's geographical sense. It is easy to walk all day in a town, and never understand, never pause to consider, the configuration of the country. But sometimes it thrusts itself upon one's understanding. It is impossible not to observe the eccentric construction of Bristol, for instance. The buildings of Man entirely fail to conceal the

* Professor Freeman.

original engineering of Nature. Exeter is another example. The city is built on the extremity of a broad spur, which overhangs and commands the river. The strength of its position is obvious; and standing at the top of Fore Street, and looking down the sharp incline to the river, one seems to recapture without an effort an understanding of her history.

Exeter, as you see it from here, has grown far beyond the original circle of her walls. But it is not difficult to imagine these lower modern houses cleared away, and to picture how the Romans found the British town, huddled about the river bank under the steep hill (and in those days it was steeper than it is now), with their stronghold on top of the spur, in the obvious place where each succeeding people has built its castle. The Romans rebuilt the castle and erected walls; and we know where they lived, for their pottery and coins have been found, and a portion of mosaic pavement; and if you would see the road they used, leading to the West Gate of the City—there it is still, a few yards only from the thoroughfare, the quaint Stepcote Hill, built on the Clovelly model. The course of the same ancient road—the Ickneild Way—is followed by the modern High Street and

Sidwell Street. Or, if you would understand how, later, Saxon and Briton dwelt side by side in separate quarters of the city—you can trace that division still by the knot of churches dedicated to the British Saints, St. Pancras, St. Petrock, St. Pol, and others. They are all close at hand. St. Pancras is considered the oldest church in Exeter —a twelfth-century building on the site of a much earlier church. It contains a sturdy early Norman font. St. Petrock's is remarkable for the persistent excrescence of aisles on its south side. The original nave has now four of these additions, which have so inflated the building in the wrong direction that the altar has had to be placed at the south end of the church, where it looks upon a colonnade running in the opposite (normal) direction, from west to east. Unhappily this architectural curiosity is disfigured by a grey-green wash, and ghastly memorial tiles of many hues.

Exeter was officially recognized as the stronghold of the West in 1050, when Edward the Confessor decided to transfer the Bishopric from Crediton to Exeter, and came himself with Edith, his Queen, to enthrone Leofric as first Bishop. But it was also very soon recognized that the city would be

more than a military stronghold, more than an episcopal see; it was predestined to commercial prosperity. The Exe possesses the largest estuary of the West, and the river was originally navigable all the way to Exeter—ten miles from the sea. A little way down the stream is Topsham ("Apsham, a praty Townlet on the Shore," as Leland called it)—a strange little town. It was once of great commercial importance—its trade with Newfoundland at the end of the seventeenth century being second only to that of London. A great deal of trade was also done with Holland, and at Topsham you may still see the queer small Dutch houses, put up by merchants who had returned from abroad imbued with Dutch manners, and built with the little Dutch bricks which they had brought home with them as ballast to their boats. The town supplied several vessels to fight the Armada. The dock where they were built was still existing five years ago. Now it is filled in, and a cider factory stands upon the site.

The prosperity of Topsham was partly due to a quarrel between Exeter and the Earls of Devon, who sought to divert the city's trade to their own port. At the end of the thirteenth century the mistress of Powderham took the drastic step of

THE EXE AT TOPSHAM

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building a weir across the river, by which the city was completely cut off from the sea. Thus Topsham became the port of Exeter. "Countess Weir" remains to this day, but, in their determination to reverse this wrong, the citizens of Exeter, in the reign of Elizabeth, succeeded in constructing the first lock canal in England—perhaps in the world.

This story argues very forcibly that the trade of Exeter was well worth diverting and well worth recapturing, and this is confirmed by concrete evidences. Trade guilds were flourishing in the reign of Henry II., from whom Exeter obtained her earliest charter, witnessed by Thomas à Becket, *circa* 1160. A Guild Hall is known to have existed in 1154, and was standing no doubt before then. In 1206 the first Mayor was elected.

For hundreds of years Exeter was a centre of the woollen manufacture, which was an established trade as early as the reign of Edward I. All over central Exeter are the visible evidences of this medieval prosperity, fortunately won when commerce did not necessitate ugliness, and when profits were definitely expended on beautifying the city. Many lovely houses must have perished, but very many remain—splendid mansions like those near

the junction of High Street and Queen Street, or those smaller, quainter buildings near the stout Elizabethan portico of the Guild Hall. The Hall itself has been often rebuilt. Most of the present structure dates from the fifteenth century. Observe the carving of its splendid door. It cost £4 10s.

Fore Street and High Street form one long thoroughfare bisecting modern Exeter. To the left and right of it, within a stone's throw, old Exeter lies hidden away in strange, steep little alleys. Here there is a Tudor cottage, and there a rosy fragment of the city wall stretches between the houses. Up one narrow lane St. Mary Arches is concealed, famous for its unparalleled arcade of Norman pillars. Another hides the miniature town mansion of the Bampfyldes, a perfect little thing, with a tiny courtyard, and an eighteenth-century cistern. St. Catherine's Chapel is completely masked within the walls of another house. It must be one of the smallest chapels ever built.

In South Street an aged door marks where the Hall of the Vicars Choral stands cheek by jowl with the modern shops. A modern stone front conceals the Tuckers Hall in Fore Street. This was originally the Chapel of St. Mary of the

Assumption (or "St. Mary's Resumption," as a helpful gentleman informed me), suppressed in 1222. About two hundred and fifty years later it was rebuilt by monks, who practised the making of cloth there. In after years it fell, at one time, to the indignity of being a storehouse; but the "Worshipful Company of Weavers, Fullers, and Shearmen" has survived till now, though in these days its sole duty is the administration of charitable bequests. Twenty years ago this glorious open timbered roof was hidden behind a plastered ceiling, and the carved panelling was loaded with coats of paint. That at least preserved the wood, so that to-day it looks fresh and decent and very beautiful.

Not far above the Tuckers Hall is the queer red church of St. Olave, founded by Gytha, mother of King Harold, and really dedicated to the Scandinavian, St. Olaf. Gytha was in Exeter when William the Conqueror arrived. She wisely fled by the West Gate as William was entering the city from the East. The Conqueror bestowed the church on the monks of Battle Abbey, and they, in 1080, founded the Benedictine Priory of St. Nicholas. Up a narrow alley-way you may find what remains of it. The Priory Church and the cloisters have

been destroyed, and the monks' dining-hall is still disguised as a private dwelling. But that part of the Priory which contained the crypt, the kitchen, the Prior's rooms, and the guest hall are restored; and extraordinarily interesting these are, for the building has been so pulled about and adapted to the uses of each century, that it constitutes a visible exposition of the growth of architectural expression.

The crypt dates from *circa* 1100; the room next to it contains fifteenth-century work, and a beautiful moulded ceiling of the sixteenth century, erected when the building was converted into a dwelling house after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Beyond this Tudor room is a thirteenth-century kitchen, lighted by a fifteenth-century window. It contains two such prodigious fireplaces as a kitchen required in those ox-roasting days. Upstairs, the guest hall, the Prior's solar and his cell, are chiefly fifteenth-century work. Here are many delightful things. The architecture of the hall is especially ingenuous—the work of men who are frankly adapting and learning as they go along. The room has six doors, and all of them are odd. The screen is skew-eyed. In the Prior's room there are five doors, one of which leads into

COUNTESS WEIR, ON THE EXE

the Prior's cell, where the planks by the window are all worn with ambulation.

Till recently these rooms were used as modern dwellings—the old floors and ceilings covered in, the ancient stairways blocked, the wood-work enamelled. When the house was converted in the reign of Elizabeth, William Hurst, Mayor of Exeter, was its first tenant. His initials may be seen on the Tudor ceiling. The Grenvilles probably divided the house with him, for their arms are on the screen, and on the walls there are still fragments of frescoes, depicting crude Pans, whose pipes are the Grenville device. Just below the fresco is a little cupboard, let into the wall, with perforated holes opening upon the fireplace. Here they warmed the wine. They did things handsomely then; in these days the wine is stewed in front of a gas-stove.

The playground over the way was once the quadrangle of the Priory Cloisters. The school below it stands on the site of the Priory Church, suppressed in 1535. In the city archives is a very delicious description by John Hoker, of an attempt on the part of certain Exeter Amazons to prevent this desecration. Jone Reve, Elizabeth Glandfield, Agnes Collaton, Alys Myller, and Jone Reede were

the heroines of this incident, and this is what they did. These "and others myndenge to stopp the suppressing of that howse came yn at last to the said Churche, some with spykes, some with shovells, some with pykes, some with suche tooles as they could geyte and the Churche dore being fast they broke it open. And finding there the man pullynge downe the Roode lofte, they all sought all the meenes they could to take hym and hurled stones unto hym. In so miche that for his satifitie he was dryven to take the Towre for his refuge and yet they pursued hym so egerly that he was enforced to leape out at a wyndo and so to save hym selff and very hardely he escaped the breakinge of his necke, but yet brake one of his rybbes. John Blackealler one of the Aldermen of the Citie beinge advertysed hereof he with all speed gate him to the sayd monastery he thinckinge what with fayre wordes and what with fowle wordes to have stayed & paciefyed the women but how so ever he talked with theym they were playne with him and the foresaide Elizabeth Glandfeld gave hym a blowe and sent him packinge: The Mayor having understandinge hereof and beinge very loth the visitors sholde be advertysed of any suche dysorders & trobles he came downe with his officers

before whose comynge they had made fast the Churche dores and had bestowed theym selffes yn places meete as they thought to stande to theire defence notwithstandinge the mayor broke yn upon theym and with mich ado, he apprehended and tooke theym all and sent theym to warde." After the dissolution was over, His Majesty's Commissioners very gallantly besought the Mayor to release the ladies.

So perished the greater part of the Priory; but that which remains forms one of the most interesting buildings in the West. I heard a platitudinizing visitor remark that there was "an old world charm about this place." There is indeed; how right she was.

A few yards from the main thoroughfare—like everything else in Exeter—is the heart of the City, the Cathedral Close; and here is Mol's Coffee Tavern, where Drake and his fellows used to meet. Upstairs there is a room like nothing else in the world, shaped ship-wise. In the windows are two hundred and thirty panes of glass, and none of them square. If you look at them long enough you can feel the roll of the waves.

Across the emerald lawn is the huge dark mass

of the Cathedral—"a good pile of building," as Dr. William Stukely wrote in 1724. Looking, from a little distance, at the west front, one realizes at once that its dignity is in no way dependent on those springing ethereal qualities which characterize most great churches. Exeter Cathedral is broad and low—it might even be called squat; but that grave gaze it bends upon you is instinct with strength and defiance. Exeter to-day is not the picture of a citadel. The City Gates have perished, and though the walls remain in certain quarters, they must be sought for. The Guild Hall, and the peaceful old houses of rich merchants, dominate the streets. The Castle is a ruin; and a lawn has draped the Castle moat. In these days the emblem of the glory of Exeter is the Cathedral. These Norman towers, unique in architecture, are symbolical of defence. Here is a refuge, a fortress.

Within the Cathedral the arches form a vista of slender branches stretching to the eastern window in unbroken symmetry, like a roof of palms. They shelter many singular beauties; and there is but one lamentable defect in the whole church—a surfeit of mural tablets which compare with the most tiresome. "Her mind possessed an energy

which does not often mark the female character," is good. And this, too: "Her Husband and her Children who had all collected around her as the mournful companions of her last days experienced that anguish which the greatness of their loss was calculated to excite." But otherwise there is not even humour to relieve the ugliness of these memorials. Fortunately, the chief blemish, a vast slab of red stone with gold lettering, has been removed to a side chapel.

The Minstrels' Gallery and the Screen; the Bishop's Throne, of fifteenth-century carving—which cost £12, and contains no single nail; the East window, the Rose window, and the windows of the transepts; the delightful fretwork of the sedilia—these are well known to everyone. And other pleasing things there are, less obvious: a battered Calvary in the north porch, which, despite the grim decapitation of the figures, possesses an exquisite appeal; the fourteenth-century tomb of the Earl and Countess of Devon in the south transept—the Earl with a wonderful hour-glass waist, and she so gently sleeping there, as though the organ notes might wake her, chasing the fleet dreams from her lovely face. And I like the gaudy brilliance—the blue, and red, and gold—of

Bishop Oldham's chantry; and Bishop Bronescombe's tomb, where a line of red and golden angels are bravely playing instruments in the most discouraging circumstances; and the remarkable effigy of Bishop Cotton with his nice puffy sleeves.

There is not in Exeter Cathedral that spirit of peace and sanctity which dwells in some great churches. This is partly because the nave is entirely filled with chairs. It lacks the solemnity of open spaces. But it is more because the whole character of the church is virile. The inside has not the fortress-like effect of the exterior, but neither has it an atmosphere of meditation or melancholy. Here is action. The Cathedral is intensely awake.

Once again it speaks for the city. Exeter is no ordinary Cathedral capital, sunk in the dreams of the past, heedless of the present or the future. It is something more than the headquarters of county justice and administration. It is the headquarters of the ordinary West Countryman; and it holds his practical loyalty and affection in a most remarkable degree. For it is not merely that here is his capital, his junction on the journey home. Exeter definitely extends a welcome. She goes to meet the prodigal returning to her streets. And as he

passes along Queen Street, he hears, with joy in his heart, the babble of the market; he sees the towers of the Cathedral, jutting above the houses by St. Martin's Lane. At the corner of the High Street, he looks down towards the dignity of the Guild Hall, and up past the old houses to the busy streets and shops, where the folk are laughing and chattering, and the pavements are blocked with little knots of people, who have so much to say to each other about nothing. There he will meet with men he used to know, and see remembered faces; and then he will naturally pass on to take tea at the house where everyone takes tea—another bond of union in this friendly county.

At last, when he leaves Exeter in the evening, he must pass beneath the shadow of the gardens of the Northernhay. The Northernhay has been a park for three hundred years, and many of the trees that stand there to-day were planted more than two hundred and fifty years ago. But before that date this slope performed a very different office. It was the curb-stone of Exeter's ancient fortifications. This is the old "Red Mound," the fortress of the Britons, the Romans, the English, and the Normans; and on the summit is a huge

fragment of the wall which girdled Rougemont Castle. On the hill the ruin keeps its guard still. In the valley below the Southern Railway clanks and whistles, and the trains glide out to the little villages of Devon.

CHAPTER II

A CORNER OF THE COUNTY

THE VILLAGE AND ITS HISTORY

"This village . . . hath beene in tymes past a thing of sum Estimation."—LELAND.

IN a valley, which runs obliquely behind the sandstone cliffs and the sea, the village lies comfortably concealed. Its houses are mostly built in terraces, gazing at each other above the roofs of the village street; and, those that can, looking steadfastly across the little bay out to the open sea. It is a pretty village, which is strange, for its buildings are almost entirely modern. There is one terrace of rosy eighteenth-century houses, fit to shelter a heroine of Miss Austen's; but the rest—even the church—is new.

But although as a parish and as a summer resort the village is the creation of a century, it stands, in fact, upon a site of venerable antiquity, is grafted upon a former hamlet whose prime was medieval. Until recently the shores of this little bay were

remote from the world, and here, long ago, a small community of fishermen, salt-makers, and adventurers dwelt; where the cliffs gave place to meadows sloping down to the sea, and where the river ran out at the eastern extremity of the bay. The parish church, and the village where it stood, was two miles inland; a beautiful village, and as old as most of the villages of England—mentioned that is to say, in Domesday, with the usual back reference to the times of Edward the Confessor. It was a Royal Manor. To-day a profound stillness broods over the old place. The white cob cottages straggle along the length of the high road. A brook wanders past the cottage gates, and, save when the children are noisily at play in the schoolyard, midway down the winding street, the noise of the water is often the most wakeful sound in all the village.

The church stands raised above the houses and road, mainly the usual fifteenth-century building, rebuilt on the skeletons of earlier churches. It is made of local sandstone, but in the eighteenth century it was rough-casted. Much of this has fallen away, and now the red peers out through the grey in queer hectic patches. Inside there are many things of interest—the rood-loft staircase, and

the hagioscopes; but the chief glory of the church is its collection of carved bench ends. These carvings would be remarkable if it were only for their aggressively secular subjects; but they are also finely done, and much more remarkable for their reflection of the thoughts of the Devon men during that period when the inspiration of Devon was the inspiration of England. Two panels display the sea serpent; another a vile tropical snake. One shows a man rather distrustfully devouring what seems to be the newly-discovered banana. Another shows the head of a Red Indian, in no way grotesquely done, but definitely true to type, carved surely by a man who had seen one, or at least on first-hand information. The best panel in the church is a most satisfying and elaborate carving of a rigged ship. On one of the bench ends is the date 1537, which suggests that their design is in part due to the general spirit of revolt from ecclesiasticism. That is probable; but it would seem that the good people of this parish were never very spiritually-minded. Their market, Risdon tells us, was "in former times irreligiously kept on the sabbath day"; and its suppression in 1660 was the result of "the dyvers misdemeanors committed by sundrie persons . . . to the great dishonoring of

Almightie God, the profanation of the Saboth, and the withdrawing of manie well-disposed people from good & godlie exercises."* As a matter of fact, Sunday markets were not at all unusual, nor was it peculiar that the Fair should be held in the churchyard, for in origin fairs are connected with the patronal festivals. But it was a little eccentric of the village to select Good Friday for its annual debauch; and one is not surprised to find that in the latter half of the eighteenth century the date was altered to Easter Tuesday.

There are some wonderful names on the gravestones in the churchyard; and somewhere, so an ancient legend has it, is the tomb of an early experimenter in aviation, late of this parish. He made himself wings, and jumped from the top of the church tower; and so ended a career of great promise.

Over the southern wall of the churchyard there is a little orchard, where daffodils and primroses and snowdrops grow in the springtime. Beyond are the roofs of farm buildings, and from these there arises a certain mooing of cows, and baaing

* "Order to restrayne marketts on the Sabbaoth." Devon Sessions, 1660. See "Transactions of the Devonshire Association," vol. xxiv., p. 329.

of sheep, and the clear persistent cackle of triumphant hens. These sounds but emphasize the general silence. The village dozes; and you would rightly guess that recorded history has not much disturbed its slumbers.

Medieval Devon was an industrial centre. Crediton, Exeter, and Ashburton were known throughout the kingdom for their woollen manufactures, and every little village was concerned in the trade in one way or another. In those days of execrable roads commerce flowed more easily by water, and towns at the river mouth controlled the continental trade of the river valley. Here the river mouth is almost blocked by a stout pebble ridge, which has gradually thrust itself across the normal opening. But it was not always like this. Once there was a snug harbour here, and long ago the mother village, and her haven by the sea, must have been of some importance. How extensive their trade was, is proved by a petition to Edward III. for a remission of tax on account of their recent sufferings at the hands of French pirates. They had lost three ships, and twelve boats, and "one hundred and forty-one men of the richest merchants and mariners of the said town." It is not in any way remarkable that the little harbour

should have suffered. The Channel was full of pirates. Only a few years before, Teignmouth had been burned and sacked. But it is remarkable, indeed, that it should have had so much to lose.

Medieval commerce owed a great deal to the enterprise of the Monasteries, and the prosperity of this parish was largely due to the monks of a neighbouring Priory. Two miles up the river, on the other (the eastern) side, is another pleasant village—its broad street passing beneath the shadow of a grove of chestnuts on the ancient village green. Till recently there were no houses here but the old cottages of cob and thatch; and although modern brick houses are gradually taking the place of the older buildings, the village has still a rare collection of the original cottages. Some of these have beautiful massive outside chimneys. One has an inset with the date 1627 on it. Near the village green is a flour mill. Hard by, the river passes beneath the bridge, flowing into the distance with green meadows on the one side, and, on the other, red cliffs and leaning trees.

This manor was given by William the Conqueror to the Abbey of St. Michael's Mount, Normandy, which established here a cell of four monks, under whose management the estate grew prosperous.

One of the principal sources of income was the manufacture of salt—evidently a profitable business, for Domesday records the employment of as many as thirty-three salt-makers, and the manufacture was continued until the middle of the eighteenth century. Henry I. enlarged the Abbey demesne by exchanging some of the manor on the western bank of the river for land the Abbey held in Berkshire. Thus the little Priory obtained possession of both banks of the river from the bridge to the sea; and doubtless it was prospering exceedingly when, in 1415, it was suppressed by Henry V., as an alien body. The lands were then transferred to another monastery; but little more than a hundred years later, Henry VIII.'s ruthless secularizations again transferred the lands, this time to private ownership.

On the hill above the river is a modern church with an aged tower—all that now remains of the older building. Near by stood the Priory; but even its site is to-day uncertain. Adjoining the church is a Tudor Manor House, erected by the first owner of the estates after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. His arms are over the porch; but the building has now degenerated into cottages.

The prosperity of the harbour had already passed

away before the Dissolution of the Monasteries, for the ridge which now so narrowly confines the river mouth had been the growth of a great many years. In the middle of the sixteenth century Leland reported that the harbour was "now clene barrid." Small boats, however, were still able to use it up to a hundred and fifty years ago. Nowadays you can only take a rowing boat up the stream at high tide.

I have said that the bay is very isolated. It will easily be understood, therefore, that when the silting-up of the river destroyed the estuary for the purposes of honest trade, it also enhanced the natural advantages of a likely spot for smuggling. In those latter years smuggling may be said to have been the village industry. Everyone was concerned in the trade—and not least the vicar of the parish. He was really the directing genius of the traffic. He had the kegs hidden in his own house, concealed in a secret chamber at the back of the old vicarage; and on one lamentable occasion he was caught there with his lady, sipping the contraband liquor by his own fireside. After the death of his wife he quickly recognized the commercial value of her ghost, and when the vicarage was likely to be the centre of the night's business, he

TEIGNMOUTH

used to dress a figure in his late helpmeet's clothes, and set her in the window, to frighten any too curious persons from prying round his doors. Sometimes the kegs were hidden among the graves in the churchyard, and also on the top of the church porch, and the tale is told to-day how the parson used to post himself on the path below, to direct the operations, and to make sure that none of the barrels were visible from the road. On one occasion a serious battle took place in the church porch between the preventive men and the smugglers. You may be sure the parson was in it.

This vicar was living in the parish till 1852. Thirty-three years before that time the visit to Sidmouth of the Duke and Duchess of Kent, and the Princess Victoria, had popularized the Devon coasts. Gradually little fishing villages became resorts of fashion. Slowly the more heinous forms of local barbarity were uprooted. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were not more than five-and-twenty houses in the hamlet by the sea, all clustered in one single street. Now the pebble ridge is the extension of a civilized marine parade. It is strange to remember that there behind its sheltering arm the salt-pans lay, and the ships were riding at anchor when the pirates came

hundreds of years ago. Here the kegs of good liquor were landed and fought for, while that savage old divine was scouting for preventive men, disguised as a parson; and here, almost in our own times, the stones for building, and even the coals, were landed with great travail on the beach.

One of the largest houses in the street stands, beyond the brook and veiled by a line of trees, on the site of one of the original cottages of the village. It was once a storehouse for smugglers, but towards the end of the reign of George III. it became a gentleman's residence. It is said that, on the nights when a haul of contraband was expected, the smugglers used quietly to abduct the gentleman's horse from his stables to help in the good work. Regularly, on the morrow, a keg of brandy or a roll of silk would be found upon the doorstep—"for services rendered." And so it happened that the gentleman did not trouble himself greatly if he found his horse tired in the morning. That old house was demolished some little time ago, but twenty years back there were still cob cottages with thatched roofs standing in the village street. I remember one of them particularly, where an old lady dwelt, who kept a miscellaneous store of remarkable resource. In

my mind visits to her emporium have crystallized into a memory of the one single item—gooseberries. It seems we bought a great deal of them; but we might also have availed ourselves of firewood, and liquid blacking, and lobsters, and many other delectable things which she sold in her front parlour.

That cottage and nearly all its fellows have gone now, but a few remain to remind us of the history of the place. There are also a number of Victorian houses, built with an eye to dignity and creature comforts—a fragrant memory of the second prime of the village, when everyone had sons or uncles in the Indian Army; and when the archery club was flourishing, and family cricket was played in the great field where the old oak-tree wound his leaning trunk in incredible gyrations, and waved gnarled arms wide enough to cover a good percentage of the population. To-day the oak is sadly changed, lopped and deprived of his strangest idiosyncrasies; and the fame of the village has drawn more people to it than ever the old tree in its prime could have borne to contemplate. But the brook still runs by the side of the village street, and the houses over the way have each their little bridge. To think of it still as the outpost of the

river valley is not impossible. Beside the most modern houses of to-day an ancient packhorse trackway runs, diving many yards deep into a steep sandstone cutting, darkly roofed with the branches of old trees. That is food for reflection. The beauty of its unique formation is suddenly enhanced by vistas of romance.

THE RIVER VALLEY

Near its mouth the river glides between banks of mud, and, when the tide is low, the sea birds gather here in clouds of white and grey, waddling stiffly over the smooth mud, or sailing without motion on the stream, or rising all together, calling their plaintive notes, circling, and then dropping again to strut on the shining bank. Higher, a solemn swan is often floating, and sometimes, with a whirr of wings and outstretched neck, flies headlong up the river, past the broad white bridge which crosses the stream half a mile from the sea.

From the first the river clings closely to the eastern flank of the valley. On the west it is enclosed by an artificial causeway, and, beyond that bank, all that was the estuary stretches away in flat water meadows clothed in reeds and marsh

flowers, until a mile or so upstream they grow into the bright green fields where the sheep are grazing, and the river flows within its natural boundaries.

Standing on the bridge with the pebble beach behind you, these flat marshes will be upon your left hand, a narrowing perspective of level greenness, tufted with docks and rushes, and bounded on the west by another little stream, beyond which the land arises in gentle ascents to a hill capped with larches and dark firs. To the right there is no such prospect, for the river runs beneath a barrier of rounded hills, clad in short grasses, and above the water breaking into red sandstone cliffs, decked with shining ivy, and shadowed with overhanging trees. The water is not much broken in its flow, and there the red cliffs, the leaning trees, and the clouds in the bright sky, are softly reflected in a glassy mirror, fringed about with rushes. Under the shadow of the banks the trout are lurking, or darting from stone to stone. There are those who endeavour to catch them.

The trees which crown the sandstone cliff and stretch their arms across the water are the natural wall of the park, which wanders round the base of these peculiar hills—a park finely in keeping with the history of the district. You will quickly per-

ceive that here is no profusion of trees planted without thought or reason. At one place, near an ancient gateway, there stands a magnificent colonnade of lime-trees, joined presently by Spanish chestnuts and beeches, stretching away, following the course of the water, till the avenue ceases, and trees of every kind grow in confusion along the tall bank of the river. Near the great lime-trees a long winding avenue of oaks leads up a slight depression in the hills, until at the summit of the ridge huge beeches and Spanish chestnuts join to form an intricate design of colonnades and arches. In the next fold of the hills a clump of sixteen oaks stands like some mysterious high place of the Druids. On the slope of the hill above them is a prim line of sycamores. On top stands a tuft of wraith-like trees, Scotch firs and beeches, distorted by close planting and exposure, half naked, tall and thin.

Here are the beginnings of a formal park, planted, they say, between three and four hundred years ago. But the great house which these trees should have dignified was never builded. The avenue of oaks should have led to the mansion's doors, but it leads only to the top of the grassy hills, where the sheep and the red cattle are grazing.

The hill above the mysterious group of oak-trees commands the surrounding country. Below it runs the strange flat valley, flowing away in a long straight line, narrowing into the distance till it grows into a mist of elms. Southward is the sea, and the cliffs climbing nobly to the beacon. Due west there are woods, and, beyond, the grass and the heather of the rising moorland, crowned with the earthworks of an ancient fort. This fort dominates the valleys of two rivers, and is one of a chain of earthworks and beacons, which, at one time long ago, controlled the whole strategy of this corner of the county. Except where the road cuts straight through the centre of the fort it is very perfect still, deeply surrounded on all sides by a ditch, and planted now with tall sombre firs, and great beech-trees.

The old people chose their strongholds well. Even in modern times the ancient fort has been counted worthy to be used in emergencies. Lord Russell encamped there when he came to relieve Exeter in 1549, when those in rebellion against the new Prayer Book were besieging the city. Again, when England was at war with the French Republic, the citizens of Exeter formed a permanent camp there to guard against a French invasion.

And during the last war the place was used for many practice battles.

Now, save when the keeper's dog barks in the recesses of the wood, there is always a perfection of silence there. The castle stares out to sea, and gazes all around it. The commons sweep away on every side in heathery undulations, studded all over with tiny fir-trees, which never seem to grow the least bit bigger. It is not lonely there. The castle commands too wide a prospect for that. But there is a sense of tension. The great circle of mounded trees is alert, watchful, expectant. From here, on the hilltop in the park, it looks as grimly forbidding as if it were a castle of steel.

Turning about now and facing eastward, mark how the sharp ridge divides us from the neighbouring valley. At its extremity it runs up into a peak, firred all down his back, and turning a sloping red face towards the sea. Beyond, the cliffs stretch away on the great curve which bends down to Portland Bill.

This side of the red peak is a little rocky bay, with two great lumps of cliff standing isolated in the water. At either extremity a natural arch, fretted in the sandstone, leads into another shel-

tered beach. A path cut through the face of the cliff, narrow and steep and deep, leads up from the bay. There is a house near by, and a farm at the head of the lane. Otherwise the bay is deserted. Here was the chosen haunt of the smugglers, and if it were worth it, smuggling could easily be carried on to-day. During the war there were ugly tales of a German submarine, which slipped into the bay, and gathered supplies of petrol on the beach. True or untrue, that is the kind of story one likes to believe of a place like this. All day the air is full of the sad crying of the sea-birds as they sweep about the cliffs. Even with trippers abroad, the place is lonely and mysterious.

The peak and its ridge on the east, the moors and their castle on the west—these are the logical boundaries of the valley. Barred on this side by a forgotten pleasaunce, protected on that by the moors and the bastions of a prehistoric castle, the sparkling water runs between the red cliff and the marshes. There is the old square tower where the Priory stood, and there a modern Folly sticks up stupidly among a haze of distant branches, just where the ancient trackway passes over the moors to Exeter. Beyond the tower, beyond the obelisk,

past bridges, waterfalls, and banks of flowers and feathery bulrushes, the valley and the river stretch far into the distance—

> Or where his wave with loud unquiet song
> Dash'd o'er the rocky channel froths along;
> Or where, his silver waters smoothed to rest,
> The tall tree's shadow sleeps upon his breast.

THE CLIFFS, THE BEACON, AND A BADGER

Walking from the pebble ridge towards the village by the sea, you must face a graceful tongue of land, forming the western horn of the bay. On it there stands a little wood. One is always brought up to believe that all true beauty spots are hidden round a corner, and must necessitate an expedition and a picnic; but in truth, I think, this upward sweep of the cliffs towards the Beacon, and then their sudden curving fall to make the horn of the bay, is one of the most elegant designs of all this coast. At any time after three o'clock in the afternoon the sun will be beyond this spit, and then it works miracles of colour and beauty. Westward will be the purple outline of the far coast, and in the bay a sea of mingled blue and primrose, with oily paths upon it where the currents swim, and a gold bar leading to the sun. But in

the middle of this brilliance the western horn of the bay grows sharp and black, and each single tree in the wood is silhouetted against the sky till they look like an oasis of palm-trees on some dreadful desert island.

I marked it once from a higher level, on the cliffs, whence I could see the water on both sides of it. On this side was a grey rolling sea, lighted by a glistening silver aisle towards the west; then came the desert island, and, beyond, a sudden pool of pearly opalescence under a rift in the clouds.

Again, I stood by a chasm in the cliffs, where a tiny stream is embarking on the tremendous task of cutting a valley down to the sea. The outer cliffs were bare and ruddy, but within the shelter of the gorge the walls were flaming with brilliant spring gorse. Beyond the gold the red, and beyond the red the sea. The sky was livid, blue-black and grey, or lighted with that angry phosphorescent brightness which betokens thunder. Beneath, the sea was grey also; but it was calm, and something in the air seemed to lift the whole pavement of water towards the sky. It shone like silk.

An upward climb along a rough, narrow path, between heather and gorse, and blackthorn and sloe, leads to the Beacon—a mile and a half from

the village, and more than four hundred feet above the sea. The cliffs are steep and dangerous. The mixture, which the Devon climate manages so nicely, of wet weather followed by frosts, produces many falls and subsidences, and the crumbling sandstone is ever seeking an easy slope where it may rest awhile. Until the Beacon the cliffs are fairly precipitous, but below the Beacon the ground has subsided and fallen over itself in a long, meandering slope towards the sea; and since there is foothold and some shelter here, a regular jungle has taken root. Here is gorse, and blackthorn, and sloe, and holly, and every kind of creeper covering the red soil—in the spring a blazing field of gold and green and white, and in winter red with holly berries, purple with the dusky bare tops of the thorns, frosty with Old Man's Beard.

This is the home of birds and rabbits and badgers and foxes. Jackdaws and magpies nest in these cliffs, and sometimes a raven. Often a hawk hovers behind the cliffs, far above the heather; and there the larks are. Down on the sandy ledges below the rabbits are always hurrying about, and some lucky day you may see the baby badgers playing there.

From this beacon you can see as far as Berry

Head to the south-west, and to the east the whole long sweep of dented cliffs (the sandstone turning suddenly to chalk) as far as Portland Bill. Inland is wooded country, and the moors, on which the circling trees mark where the castle watches all the shores relentlessly. The village and the river valley is now due east; westward is the estuary of another, broader, stream. Beyond, the country rises towards Dartmoor, whose distant heights are clearly visible.

Immediately below the Beacon, the land drops quickly downwards to gentle green fields, where many elm-trees grow; and there is the western horn of the bay, with its tropical wood, lying low and lazy in the ocean. Stand above the little cove where the tongue first starts to run out to the sea, and thence look eastward, back along the line of cliff—that is more lovely, I think, in colouring and form, than any cliff I know. Beyond the tongue is another secluded bay, with a long stretch of hard unruffled sands, and a reef of rocks. Here a buoy is anchored, and a woeful bell rings a warning over the water. It has a pessimistic note. It does not cry "Keep off! Beware!" It rings a knell lugubriously: "I *knew* you'd be drowned. I *always* said so." One feels it was put there by the wreckers.

I have mentioned the abundance of foxes and badgers and rabbits and birds, which live on the cliff and on these moors. Of course they provide good sport for those that hunt them. Here I am a heretic. I cannot see how any honest argument can prove that hunting—as it is done—is anything but cruel and degrading. Hunting as it might be done is a very different proposition.

Here are two pictures. I shall not forget once meeting with a group of huntsmen and ladies, digging a badger from his earth, while the hounds stood round to snap him up as soon as the poor beast appeared. That seems poor sport. Badgers do harm, but they might be shot, or alternatively they might be hunted fairly.

This is the other picture. Five of us had dined together, and had waited for the moon to rise. Now it was half-past ten, and, arming ourselves with sticks, we and the bull-terrier went off down the hill and round the corner to where the moor begins. There our friend was waiting for us—the little man who knew the ways of every wild thing, and with him his bull-terrier and a whippet.

We could not go across the heather. The wind was blowing towards our quarry, and though the hunting-ground was more than a mile away, we

must go to it by détour. And so we trudged along the high road in the moonlight, up the hill between silvery beeches and mysterious firs, till at last we halted by a wood in a bye-lane, and there, while we took a final breather, received a lecture on the habits of the badger, his fondness for biting you in the stomach, and so forth. Then we dipped beneath the shadow of the fir-trees, and, climbing a hedge, descended at the top of a field sloping towards the west. There we crouched, the six of us and the two bull-terriers. The whippet, at a word from his master, had gone off down the field, and was already out of sight.

We five in breathless excitement sat waiting we knew not what. The little man and his bull-terrier knew. The dog was sniffing the air, and straining forward; the man was listening for something to happen down at the end of the long field.

Then we heard it—one single bark. The little man quivered, and the dog bristled. Both of them knew from that bark that the little dog had sighted his quarry: but they did not move. A minute later there came another bark, sharper and louder. The whippet had tackled the badger. Before the bark had finished echoing over the

fields, the little man and his dog were gone, pelting down the field, and we after them.

The bull-terrier had arrived before we were halfway down, and snarls and growls and yelps rang up from the hedgerow. The little man followed cursing his fortune. His puttees were down, circling round his legs. There was no time to do them up. He was dancing round the whirling mass of fur, shouting like a madman, and forming us round the fight in a circle. Leaping and hooting there in the pale moonlight, he was like a Bacchanal performing some savage rite of initiation. Then suddenly the badger broke away with the two dogs after him (our bull-terrier was funking). We crashed after, the little man leaving the remnants of puttees on every branch and brier; and then the circle formed again for many breathless moments, till finally the old badger got among some undergrowth too dense for the dogs to follow.

I call that the sporting way to hunt the badger. Everyone (including the badger I do believe) enjoyed it; for this was real hair-raising battle, the badger taken in the open, not dug from the bowels of the earth without a chance of escape—and as for that, I think we were all glad our badger got

away. He deserved it: he had been fighting a whippet and a bull-terrier, backed with the moral force of human encouragement; and the dogs had got the worst of it.

How had the little man learned the exact time and place where the old grey badger took his walks? How had he trained the whippet to his extraordinarily capable performance, down to the nicety of those two single barks?

As we wandered home by the Beacon, a great moon flooding the moors and the sea, the little man gave us his opinion of ordinary badger hunting in words of brimstone.

THE WOOD AND THE MEADOW

You cannot fail to notice a ridge which runs northward from the village. As the great moors, on which the castle stands, are the ultimate boundary of the river valley, so this ridge is the immediate boundary. Its southern end is covered with a long dark wood, and after it there follow steep fields of grass, and commons thick set with bracken and brambles. On the side of this ridge there is a large excrescence, the spur of which is planted with a small round wood. Near by there

stands a single tree, waving wide arms against the sky-line.

The road that leads towards the rounded wood is very soon a lane; and the lane soon dips, and twists, and climbs again along a rugged path cut in the sandstone. The hazels lean overhead, and there are little oaks, and holly, and ivy, and many ferns; and gorse too, brightening and shedding fragrance on the lane. For a long way the foliage conceals the round wood; but at the top of the lane there is a little dip, and there the fat mound rises suddenly at your feet, with oaks and elders and beeches around the lowest ring of the wood. The mound is high; the great firs are higher, and between their beautiful straight stems you look upward at the sky and the moving clouds. How lovely those stems are! Naked nearly to their tops, their barks are grey-green scales, splashed with red and brown and orange, and decorated with crinkly green lichen. You must clamber to the top over the slippery surface of roots and pine-needle pins, for there there is a round tableland, small and fairylike. The floor is nicely carpeted with moss, and brown pine-needles, laid there with care by those who like to have things neat about their house. Here they have set a gold and scarlet

toadstool by the stump of a tree; and here are trails of honeysuckle. In the corner vivid fronds of bracken bunch about the red earth hedge, where the wood joins the neck of the ridge, and pink foxgloves stand like sentinels. Between the boles of the trees the distant Channel quivers and glitters. Overhead, when there is but a little wind, the wide green tops are soughing like the sea, when the ground swell draws the pebbles.

A savage would at once declare this wood a holy spot; the child immediately conceives it as a place apart; for it has a unique atmosphere which is not earthly. Often one sees men and women and children picking sticks and fircones here; and, whoever they are, one is instantly reminded of those favourite fairy stories, whose setting was always in the woods, and whose characters loved so well to pick sticks and burn the charcoal. The last time I was there I saw no one all that afternoon but an old old man picking fircones in this queer plantation. He stared at me and said no word. I knew him well enough; indeed he had my sympathy, for neither he nor I could tolerate his wife. He was not romantic, however, or remotely attractive: and yet I gazed at him with admiration, grovelling there among the fircones, to think how

well he played the part of the gnome of the wood; how strangely the dramatic beauty of this place had changed him. There I left him; but on my way home I passed him in the lane trudging along with his sticks and fircones. The glory had departed.

Beyond the trees is another commanding eminence, for the village lies at your feet with the bay beyond; and eastward is that long ridge which confines the valley, with the red peak, and the dazzling line of the white cliffs beyond. Behind is another wood, mostly of oaks and larches, deep and exquisite, where bluebells and anemones cover the ground, and sorrel grows on the banks, and where you may dig for pig-nuts. There the young Walter Raleigh used to walk from his birthplace just behind the wood—an Elizabethan manor, shaped like an E, bowered in an old-fashioned country garden. They will show you there where the great thinker smoked that famous pipe, in contempt of the other half-dozen rooms in the country which claim the same distinction. But the latest evidences are a severe blow to all these traditional claims. They are saying now that Sir John Hawkins was the pioneer of smoke.

If you will walk on, through the profusion of

gorse and bracken and bramble which here covers the common, and will climb the hedge, you will find a peculiar field, shaped as a valley, like the head of a stream long since dried. As you scramble into it the rabbits scuttle in all directions, and perhaps a pheasant will rise, like a rocket, almost at your feet. One side of the vale is bare but for a little gorse and bracken. The other side is thickly covered with both, and spread with primroses. No lane leads hither; and yet, although divided only by a hedge from the common and the strange wood behind, this hidden bank has not an air of mystery. Here there are no fairies lurking among the primroses. This bank is for mortals. Around are the meadows where the sheep and the cows are at pasture; and hither should come Daphnis and Acrotime and the rest, neat-herds and shepherdesses, to dance in the valley hollow, and pipe beneath the trees, and to whisper in the shadow of deep bracken.

The Arcadians are not there to-day; but the lambs are in the fields, and they look at a man with the profoundest interest and respect, which I greatly appreciate. It is one of the most lamentable things in nature that these pretty things must grow up to be sheep.

It is worth while crossing to the far slope of this little valley, for you are standing then on the main ridge above the river. In the elm-trees down below there is much cawing from the rooks, and the air is so empty of other sound, that their chatter seems the one important thing in the whole countryside. There is no other sign of life or motion down there, where you see once again the grey tower of the mother church, and further east the old brown tower of the other village. And so the eye travels down the river, past the park (even from here you can descry the patterns of the trees), till you come, at last, back to the pebble ridge and the sea.

CHAPTER III

DARTMOOR

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading:
It vexes me to choose another guide:
Where the gray flocks in ferny glens are feeding;
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain side.

EMILY BRONTË.

I

IN fair weather you may see the heights of Dartmoor from the first slopes of Exmoor, thirty miles away, beyond the Somerset boundary; and when its battlements are seen thus from the far distance, or when its towers stand black and weird against the sunset, there rises a mysterious country, beckoning and compelling. A closer view of its outer ramparts is less impressive, because the whole encircling country crowds upwards to the margin of the moor. But the first impression is the true one. Within lies a country more spectacular, and more aggressively beautiful than anything in the West.

Pale grassy pastures start up bare to the sky. The hills are crowned with dark masses of granite,

and covered with the ruins of primeval mountains. Among the rocks the ling and the heath lie deep. The hollows are thick with bracken and brilliant gorse. High among the hills lie the great peat bogs, the source of many rivers. These streams have cut their way tumbling through a hundred rocky valleys. About their banks coloured mosses cling, and rowan-trees dangle bunches of scarlet berries.

Except around the few moorland settlements, there are no trees. There never were any. The Princes of Wales have owned the Forest rights of Dartmoor since the days of the Black Prince, and the term "Forest" only signifies here a royal hunting-ground. Not all of Dartmoor is within the boundaries of the Forest. The outskirts of the moor are common lands belonging to the surrounding parishes. The whole moorland covers two hundred and twenty-five square miles, and reaches more than two thousand feet above the sea —in summer a maze of gold and green and purple; in winter a mist of browns and yellows, illumined by the colour caught in the clear cold air.

Every year hundreds of visitors crowd to the villages on the fringes of the moor, and over the high roads char-à-bancs and motor-cars exercise a

shallow *de facto* jurisdiction. But in truth there are few who trouble to stray far from the paths into the wild heart of the moor, where the old forest lies still unconquered, its silences only accentuated by human voices.

II

Thomas Hood's famous sonnet on Silence expounds a great truth about Dartmoor:

> There is a silence where hath been no sound;
> There is a silence where no sound may be;
> In the cold grave, under the deep, deep sea,
> Or in wide desert, where no life is found,
> Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound.
> No voice is hushed, no life treads silently;
> But cloud, and cloudy shadows wander free,
> That never spoke, over the idle ground.
> But in green ruins, in the desolate walls
> Of antique palaces, where Man hath been,
> Though the dun fox, or wild hyæna, calls,
> And owls, that flit continually between,
> Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan,
> There the true Silence is, self-conscious and alone.

Many hundreds of years ago men lived in this green ruin, now silent and depopulated. The Ivernians of the Neolithic Age, a little, dark-haired, agile people, came to Britain—so the Ethnologists tell us—some twelve thousand years ago. Long

ages after, about 1500 B.C., the first Celtic invaders arrived—the people of the Bronze Age, tall and fair and stupid, speaking an Aryan tongue. They rapidly mixed with the Ivernians; but though the language of the invaders prevailed (and from it are derived the modern dialects of Erse, Gaelic, and Manx), the customs and the physical characteristics of the little men predominated in the fusion of the two races. The course of many centuries has obliterated the remains of prehistoric man in the plains and cultivated valleys—if, indeed, he ever lived much in the lowlands, when these were little but thick and dangerous jungles. But among the hills, which no plough can subdue, and where Science has as yet stayed her hand, their homes and their memorials are still standing. Dartmoor is thickly strewn with them. These antiquities belong to the period of the late Neolithic and the early Bronze Age—that is, to the period when stone was still the general material, but bronze was known and highly treasured, or, roughly, to the first period of the amalgamated races.

It is nearly two thousand years since the Christian era opened, and here lie the ruins of houses centuries older yet. An empty house, even a new one, is a pathetic, eerie thing. Instantly we people it

with phantoms. How shall we feel before these empty homes builded so long ago?

This little people lived in circular stone huts, about four feet high and from three to ten yards in diameter, thatched probably with heather and banked around with turf, each home a little green mound. Sometimes the huts were gathered together in pounds, within an encircling wall. Many of these settlements have been carefully excavated—and there their fireplaces, and cooking holes, and rough stone seats have been discovered; their cooking utensils, flint weapons, and treasured instruments of bronze; even their crystals for divining. They must have lived in great numbers on the moor, for thousands of these antiquities have been destroyed —to mend modern roads and churches, to serve as gate-posts, or to build the rough stone enclosures with which the farmers have encroached upon the commons; yet vast quantities remain. Sometimes the scattered circles lie hardly recognizable as huts amid the heather, but often the tiny walls thrust themselves up, clearly distinct; indeed, if the vegetation which has grown over their floors were removed, and the roofs were thatched again, they might still serve as rude shelters. It was in one of these that Sherlock Holmes sheltered during his

adventure with the Hound of the Baskervilles. There is an illustrated edition of that excellent work, containing marvellous and grossly inaccurate pictures of Dr. Watson crouching within the ample accommodation of a cosy hut the size of a gentleman's study. The capable detective must have excavated it, and built it up himself. I never yet saw a hut of such generous proportions, or even one ready to receive visitors in any way at all.

On the outskirts of the moor—for instance at Whit Tor, Brent Tor, Cranbrook, Bridestowe, Holne, Okehampton—are the ruins of several fortified encampments. There are no camps within the moor: these, therefore, would appear to be the outposts defending a united people of the highlands. In them quantities of flints have been found.

The most impressive relics of this people concern their religion. Ancestor-worship begets ancestor-fear, which explains their peculiar respect for the dead. They feared their dead, and took enormous pains to provide them with tombs pleasant enough to beguile them, and to prevent their returning to seek creature comforts in the land of the living. Further and more drastic precautions were also taken. Determined to run no

risks of ghostly visitations, they placed their graves as far away as possible—on the tops of the hills and amid remotest bogs—in the pious hope of confusing the poor spirits, striving to return to their brethren in the valleys. There they stand yet. A mighty monolith, solitary on the waste of heather, commemorating some great man among the little people: against the sky along the hill-top, the avenue of solemn stones leading to some forgotten grave: on the tops of the broad beacons, cairns to the eternal memory of some unknown.

Far away from the roads you will come suddenly upon circles of stone, alone and mysterious—something like Stonehenge, but ruder and smaller. No one knows their exact purpose—whether the tribal meeting-place was here, or whether this was the temple of religion. Some think it may have been a crematorium.* Others cling to the ancient theory that the stones were for astronomical observances. Others, again, prefer an explanation quite different from these. Certain damsels, it would seem, danced on the Sabbath, and were

* Thick charcoal deposits show that large fires have been lighted within the circles. But this would fit in also with the theory of a tribal meeting-place. See Baring-Gould's "A Book of Dartmoor," p. 58.

straightway petrified on a charge of profanity. On Midsummer night they dance in a ring.

The stone row at Stall runs for over two miles. The menhir at Drizzlecombe stands eighteen feet high. In the cairns and kistvaens the ashes of the dead have been discovered, and, on rare occasions, an urn, or a jewelled knife, or a bronze dagger, valuable presents to pacify the departed.

These are wonderful things. They have found even the bright pebbles they used in their play. Perhaps that brings one closest to those far ages. The women of course would be cooking, doing the dirty work, or gossiping. But picture the men folk rattling the dice. Or the prehistoric babies at tiddleywinks.

Long after the prehistoric era Dartmoor was inhabited by the medieval tin miners. Their "blowing houses," mostly Elizabethan structures, lie in silent ruins by every stream.

About the moor are many strange old granite crosses, some set by the wayside, some apart. Not much is known of them. They stand gravely Christian among the Pagan monuments.

To-day—save for settlements at places like Widdecombe, Postbridge, Princetown, Dartmeet,

Hexworthy, Belstone, and a few lonely farms—the moors are inhabited only by the cattle, the sheep, and the ponies. Nearly all the well-known moorland "centres"—like Lydford, Mary Tavy, Chagford, Okehampton, Ashburton—are not really on the moor. You must walk a mile or two before you leave the lanes and fields, and have the heather around you, where the true silence is.

III

The Ivernians have left their mark not only in racial characteristics which have prevailed to the present day, but in Folk-lore also. For Fairies are as old as our nation, and our little dark forefathers are the originals of most of them. Especially on Dartmoor have their legends survived and developed. This is partly because the cold reasoning of Civilization has breathed its blight on these remoter places later than anywhere else, and partly because the great suitability of the place inevitably reacts on the imagination. There may be no one by you as you climb the hills—only the sheep nibbling the grasses, or the ponies and the dark cattle stirring on the hill's side. But the moor is filled with voices—the wind rushing above

the towers of rock, the river singing beneath, the heather rustling.

They say that Man is a sociable animal. In these days he can hardly help himself. There are not many places in this sadly over-populated island where a man may be alone; but if ever it happens that he escapes from his fellow creatures to such a wilderness as this, it is but to feel the atmosphere dense with a cloud of witnesses. For when there is nothing but the wind and the rocks about him, then his senses become acutely conscious of the companions he is lacking. He has become so dependent on his fellows that he does not believe them absent merely because he does not see them. Over the brow of the hill they linger; or beyond the grey towers of stone where the cattle are turning their innocent wondering faces to gaze at some new thing.

This paradoxical emotion leads some men only to an appreciation of the colossal majesty of Nature; but in most men it kindles a half-belief in shadows. Our first grounding in fairy tales went deeper than we imagine. We have only to flee from the protecting paw of Civilization to the still unconquered corners of the world, and there our self-confidence falls from us.

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap
And white owl's feather!

Dartmoor is the kingdom imagination builds for these Fairy people; and Dartmoor is the land where in fact their legends have lingered, grown, and begotten others. It would not be profitable to discuss the veracity or the probability of Devonshire fairy tales. One thing is certain: the people who live on Dartmoor believe in them—and they ought to know. Less than fifty years ago a farmer went so far as to sacrifice a sheep on the top of a tor to propitiate the Pixies, who were destroying his flocks. The plague was stayed.

The Pixies are malicious and mischievous; but not wicked. True—they abduct children (they stole little Bridget, you remember, for seven years long); but only because they love them.

"Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand."

And they will lead you astray, and souse you in a bog—but only for the fun of the thing. They will not lead you to your destruction—that is, if you know how to behave yourself and do not offend them.

We are fortunate enough to possess the confession of faith of the chiefest of these sprites, set down on paper more than three hundred years ago. A Fairy—somewhat self-righteous, for her own Queen was admittedly guilty of detaining

> A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king;
> She never had so sweet a changeling—

this Fairy addresses Puck with a direct challenge.

> "Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
> Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
> Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are you not he
> That frights the maidens of the villagery;
> Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
> And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
> And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
> Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
> Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
> You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
> Are you not he?"
>
> "Fairy, thou speak'st aright;
> I am that merry wanderer of the night."

He takes exception to none of the charge. He even adds a few more spicy anecdotes of his own.

Of all these pranks the Pixies' favourite is to "mislead night-wanderers," and there are many intricate paths, where you may lose your way on the moor, known as the Pixy Lanes. Some years ago an artist I knew of was solemnly cautioned by an old lady at Dartmeet not to stay out upon the moors after dusk. He disregarded the warning; but the old lady was triumphantly vindicated. After wandering about for two hours in the mist he found himself back in his original position—pixy-led, and very cold. I hope that "learned him."

Only the other day an old gentleman at Belstone was greatly disturbed because a lady rode up the Pixies' Hill in the Cleave after dark and alone. The fact that she suffered no hurt he attributed to the fortunate coincidence that her pony's name was Pixy. For future occasions he warned her that the proper way to deal with a Pixy was to put your coat on inside out.

This is a well-known charm against the Pixies. The *Western Daily Mercury* of June 6, 1890, told a story of a North Devon labourer who was pixy-led in a wood where he was working.*

"... He avers that on stooping to pick up the

* See "Transactions of the Devonshire Association," vol. xxiv., p. 52, for the full account.

tool a strange feeling came over him, and while totally unable to raise himself he heard peals of discordant laughter all around. It flashed across his mind that he was being *pixie-led*, and though he has many times heard stories of people being in similar state, his presence of mind forsook him, and he was unable to turn his coat inside out—a sure talisman against the spells of pixies. . . . It appears from his account the pixies held him under their spell for nearly five hours, and at the end of the time he was able to crawl away on his hands and knees, scarce knowing where he was creeping, tumbling head over heels into a stream. . . . The man firmly believes in pixies, and what strengthens his belief is the fact that a tailor . . . was 'pixy-led' in the same wood some years before, and remained under their spell until morning. It may be said the man was drunk, but it can be proved on the best authority that no intoxicating liquor was drunk that day by any of the party."

A letter written in 1827 records another, older, and more drastic prescription,* which I will quote, though I cannot commend the writer's levity.

"About seventy years ago a clergyman named Tanner held two benefices between Crediton and

* *Ibid.*, vol. xxxvii., p. 112.

THE FRINGE OF DARTMOOR NEAR HOLNE

South Molton, adjoining each other. The farmers of both parishes attended the tithe-audit annually at his residence; and in going to the glebe-house the distant parishioners had to pass an extensive moor, intersected by numerous tracks or sheep-walks. Although they reached their destination in safety in the morning, yet on their return they invariably found themselves 'pixy-laid,' and were compelled to pass a night of bewildered wandering upon the moor. Such recreation at Christmas was not very agreeable, and it was determined that a deputation from the parishioners should proceed to Exeter, and consult an old woman celebrated for her skill in charming away the toothache. Her instructions against pixy spells proved effectual. She directed the waylaid travellers, on reaching the verge of the moor, to strip themselves and sit down on their clothes for five and thirty minutes or more, according to the state of the weather; and as soon as they discovered the cloud which the pixies had thrown around them to be dissipated, they might then safely proceed. By following this valuable prescription, Mr. Tanner's parishioners invariably reached their homes without further interruption from pixy spells, or inconvenience from their hospitable pastor's cockagee cider."

In the same letter is a pretty tale of a family called Sokespitch, resident at Topsham in the days before scepticism triumphed in those parts.

". . . A barrel of ale in their cellar had for very many years continued to run freely without being exhausted. It was considered as a valuable heir-loom, and was respected accordingly until a curious maid-servant took out the bung, to ascertain the cause of this extraordinary power. On looking into the cask, she found it full of cobwebs; but the pixies, it is supposed, were offended, and on turning on the cock as usual, no more ale flowed out.

"Captain Sainthill of the royal navy, who is now in his eighty-eighth year, informs me that when he was a boy, the common reply at Topsham to the inquiry how any affair went on, when it was intended to say that it was proceeding prosperously, was, 'It is going on like Sokespitch's cann.'"

One other tale—one that seems to indicate a curious Catholic survival. Not long ago a woman at Sticklepath was telling a lady how she had found her door stuck fast, and had been unable to open it. She went upstairs and prayed to Michael, and next day the door opened. "'Twas they pixies, mum," she explained.

Most of the old customs and rituals have fallen

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into decay. They do not wassail the apple-trees in these days—a pretty custom if ever there was one. More than this, some of the moorland villages are actually so up to date that they rejoice in an imitation of the continental carnival. Yet even a Board School education has failed to paralyze their belief in the pixies.* This is comforting; for it is a sad thing that civilization and art should be so bitterly opposed to each other.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

These lines of Thomas Hardy voice an almost universal longing. Always belief is more comforting than nihilism. Gladly we subscribe to the creed of Fiona Macleod.

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones,
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

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* The late Rev. S. Baring-Gould, in his "Book of Dartmoor," first published in 1900, remarks that "superstition is

IV

Some parts of the moor are terribly lonely, and there have gathered many satanic legends about them.

Most people believe in the personal existence somewhere of evil spirits; and a domicile more suitable than some of the wastes and bogs of Dartmoor may not be pictured. The bogs about Cranmere Pool look like that dreadful land where Milton's lost Angels found their refuge after escaping from the worse Stygian flood. The solid fires have died; but instead there stretches a vast tract of black peat bog, studded with heathery tussocks, unrelieved in its flatness,* and rimmed around with dark peaks. After a hot summer deep cracks split across the dried peat, and you

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dead now on Dartmoor, and ghosts as well as pixies have been banished." I do not at all agree with him. The schools have delivered a great attack on ancient beliefs and customs—with much success. But they certainly have not eradicated superstition; and in a country as wild as Dartmoor I do not believe they ever will. The wildest parts of the moor will implant superstition in the breast of a cockney visitor. *A fortiori,* how can it affect those whose home it is?

* Except for Cut Hill, which arises in the centre of the great bogs.

may peer down some dozen feet and think how low you might have lain had you fallen in the mire when the bogs were hungry in winter.

Mr. Baring-Gould says he has known a horse tremble and sweat with fear there. It is not unlikely. I remember walking there alone once, from Sticklepath, and steering a very grim course. Instead of ascending to Belstone and attacking Cranmere by way of the Taw Valley, I climbed the eastern flank of Cosdon Beacon to Raybarrow Pool, where I struck the track which leads past a stone circle towards Hound Tor. The stone circle was the first surprise. I had not been that way before, and it was not marked on the ancient map I was using. Suddenly I came upon it—a little thing, but with an awful dignity. Then I clambered on to Hound Tor—passing a lot of black-faced sheep, all of which looked like the devil in sheep's clothing; and next to Wild Tor, which is gifted (or seemed to be on that day) with a peculiar eeriness. On top was a sheep newly dead. . . . I fled onwards, up the slope to Hangingstone Hill—a dreary uncomfortable climb.

Hangingstone Hill is about due east of Cranmere, but that side of it is covered with bogs, and it was a difficult business before I got down to Taw

Head, where the river is a silly little trickle about five inches across. In the centre of these bogs is a famous "post-box"; each visitor leaves his letters and takes away those he finds to the nearest post office. A visitors' book keeps a record of those who have accomplished the adventure. Correspondence should not be urgent, for your letter may take a day or six months in reaching its destination.

Walk yourself to Cranmere (passing only a prehistoric circle, a defunct sheep, and a flock possessed of the devil), escaping from evil bogs to attain your objective, which is to sit amongst a waste of vaster bogs—and you will surely return with the conviction that you have been very close to Nature.

The lines I have quoted as a heading to this chapter continue thus:

> What have these lonely mountains worth revealing?
> More glory and more grief than I can tell:
> The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
> Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.

No—it is no wonder that parts of the moor have always been connected with stories of ghosts and the devil. It is not only their loneliness that wraps them in mystery. They are haunted. And why not? If ghosts are anywhere they will be

here. Who doubts it? Not the people of Dartmoor, at any rate.

The most famous of the old Dartmoor beliefs concerns the Wisht Hounds who are supposed to hunt over the moor at night, jet black, breathing fire, and followed by a tall dark huntsman.

There used to be a saying that the Wisht Hounds were the spirits of children who had died unbaptized. This militates against the Christian legend which teaches that these babies are at play without the gates of Heaven. It lends, however, an additional touch to that dramatic tale of the ghostly pack told by Mr. Baring-Gould in his "Book of Devon."

"One night a moorman was riding home from Widdecombe. There had been a fair there; he had made money, and had taken something to keep out the cold, for the night promised to be one of tempest. He started on his homeward way. The moon shone out occasionally between the whirling masses of thick vapour. The horse knew the way better perhaps than the master. The rider had traversed the great ridge of Hameldon, and was mounting a moor on which stands a circle of upright stones—reputedly a Druid circle, and said to dance on Christmas Eve—when he heard a sound

that startled him—a horn, and then past him swept without sound of footfall a pack of black dogs.

"The moorman was not frightened—he had taken in too much Dutch courage for that—and when a minute after the black hunter came up, he shouted to him, 'Hey! huntsman, what sport? Give us some of your game.'

"'Take that,' answered the hunter, and flung him something which the man caught and held in his arm. Then the mysterious rider passed on. An hour elapsed before the moorman reached his home. As he had jogged on he had wondered what sort of game he had been given. It was too large for a hare, too small for a deer. Provokingly, not once since the encounter had the moon flashed forth. Now that he was at his door he swung himself from his horse, and still carrying the game, shouted for a lantern.

"The light was brought. With one hand the fellow took it, then raised it to throw a ray on that which he held in his arm—the game hunted and won by the Black Rider. It was his own baby, dead and cold."

The Wisht Hounds are not the only terrors of the moor. On the marshes Jack o' Lantern lights his lure. Everyone knows how—

OKEHAMPTON

River of Dart, O River of Dart,
Every year thou claimest a heart.

And they say the river cries aloud when the weather is on the change.

These superstitions are easily cleared away. Many men have been drowned in the Dart, which is subject to sudden freshets; but not always one each year. The Hounds, they say, are the wind—or flocks of birds flying across the moor *en route* for their summer or winter quarters. It is not the river that cries, but the gale blowing in the gullies.

I know: but give me my superstitions. To what end have northern farmers endeavoured to subdue the stubborn soil of the moor? Their buildings lie desolate beside the homes of prehistoric man. The rivers and the hillsides have been bombarded by artillery, and ransacked by the tin miners. To-day the old blowing houses lie in ruins beside the streams they robbed. Many have passed this way; but the Moor remains imperturbable. The miners left their workings because they no longer paid. The farmers failed because the soil is unsuitable for cultivation. I grant it. Yet still in fact there lingers a great humility of spirit in the presence of this unearthly wilderness, superior to generations of men. Beside its waters, or on

the tall hill's crest we walk ecstatically, but not proudly, not with self-confidence. We are guests here.

V

At the north-eastern corner of Dartmoor, Cosdon Beacon rises to a height of 1,799 feet. Far below, and clinging to the base of its northern slope, lies the long white village of Sticklepath, its single street disturbed and perilous from the cloud of motorists journeying on the high road from Exeter to Okehampton. At the lower end of the village, the River Taw, turning northward in its descent to Barnstaple Bay, passes beneath an old grey bridge. Near by, pretty houses, raised above the level of the road, stand back beyond a barrier of green lawns and a little brook. At the top of the village there is a Holy Well and an ancient inscribed stone. Near by, the road swings to the right towards Okehampton. A ruder track turns sharply to the left, passes a few cottages and a mill, and then, twisting to the right, opens on a deep ravine, almost invisible from the high road a few yards away.

This is Belstone Cleave—one of the loveliest scenes on Dartmoor. Here there is none of that

eeriness which characterizes the grim ruin of Tavy Cleave. It is not bare and lonely and silent; but luxuriant, filled with life and music. The vast mass of Cosdon forms its barrier on the southern side, its lower slopes at first clothed in trees, above which the bare top arises in great billowy gradations. Higher up, after Skaigh Woods have ceased, the whole mountain climbs stark from the river that rushes at its base through a glen of gorse and bracken. Seated above the further end of the valley is Belstone.

This cleave is the scene of all my earliest memories of Dartmoor, when staying many years ago hard by the Holy Well in Sticklepath. Down by the river immediately behind the village there was a deposit of china clay, and we used to run down early in the morning and fashion curious pots and vases from the sticky white mess, and lay them on the stones to bake in the sun—fondly imagining ourselves young William de Morgans, founders of a unique romantic industry. Unhappily I think our receipt was defective; or else the sun (broiling as it was) was not fierce enough to bake pottery. We always believed we were creating things of beauty, but when we found them in the evening they were cracked and broken. I

do not remember being disappointed. The potter's art was an early morning relaxation.

Just inside the cleave is a leat, which flows from the Taw to the Mill. We used to stretch night-lines across it to catch fish. I never remember catching any—but this was not a disappointment either; we told many brave tales of the numbers caught the year before. In the middle of the leat was a most curious current which diverted small objects to describe a hairpin bend in the water. We built a tiny harbour on the left bank, and floated little boats past it downstream. As they reached the harbour they used to turn solemnly in the water, and, manned by a ghostly crew, steer into port. Sometimes, if you floated them from a slightly different angle, they missed the current and sailed gravely by; and we never knew if the invisible skipper would decide to run for port or pass on down the channel. That was a good game—far more ingenious than most expensive mechanical toys. I hope it still works.

Just where Skaigh Woods cease, and Cosdon runs down to the water in bold round outlines, there is a tiny rocky spur that thrusts itself off from the mountain, like a square stone bastion set against the hillside. This is Ivy Tor. It is not

really a tor ; it is an excrescence, one of Cosdon's ribs, laid bare of its turf and heather covering. A little rough path—beside a stream of coldest water (it is full of iron, and has stained the stones a rusty yellow)—leads steeply up the first slope of the mountain, and to the top of the Tor, where a few square yards of grey-green turf are spread upon the roof of the stumpy tower of rock.

You sit with your back to Cosdon, gazing across the valley. Immediately at your feet is a precipitous wall of cliff, dropping to the river banks. To left and right the rocks fall down in handsome ruins. About them festoons of gleaming ivy hang, and rowan-trees lean gracefully, laden with bright fruit. Behind, Cosdon sweeps onwards, where cattle and sheep and ponies are gently grazing. Below, the river curves and foams amid innumerable boulders, then whisks away to the right, clinging to the base of the mountain, and hiding itself beneath the leafy fringes of Skaigh Woods.

The Taw is the most friendly of the Dartmoor streams. It hurries along, not like your noisy rivers, or inanely babbling—but frisking and sparkling, a little rocky river, with occasional deep pools where the trout lie still, maintaining a masterly indifference towards anything in the nature of

bait. The other important Dartmoor rivers have all a feeling of the uncanniness of the moors: the Tavy and the West Okement with their awe-inspiring valleys, and the Dart with its legend of human sacrifice. But the Taw is a chatty domestic little thing.

Climbing up the slope on the far side of the cleave is the Pixies' Hill—that same on which the lady was mercifully preserved by her pony's lucky name. At the top, the road passes behind the ridge and makes for Belstone, which is about a mile ahead. There is also a footpath which threads along the top of the cleave, commanding the whole incomparable scene. A leat runs beside the path for most of the way, and skimming above it are dazzling dragon-flies.

At Belstone there are a number of those delicious people who have made such excellent copy for so many Dartmoor novelists. At a grand village wedding recently a guest arrived in a resplendent hat of feathers. She had had the hat some years, but never yet had found an opportunity for wearing it in public. If she might not wear it openly, at least she could enjoy it privately; and so, for the last three years, she had gone upstairs and tried it on each Saturday afternoon.

She herself told this to the bride, and the bride told me. Up here, too, the rigours of the Devonshire dialect are still maintained with some persistence. A cock is a stag; we catch a pail of water; the mooing of a cow is belving; and to riddle a fire is to poke it.

Belstone is not in itself as pretty a village as Sticklepath—but it has the unspeakable advantage of being one of the few moorland centres which really are on the moor. Places like Okehampton, and Moreton, and Ashburton are hopelessly inconvenient for Dartmoor, unless you have a car—and that binds you to the high road. Even Chagford is not itself on the heather. That is a most beautiful little place. I remember it best for the sake of a lady of about six years old who sang to us there:

> Take her by her lily-white hand,
> Lead her crost the water,
> Give her kisses one two three,
> Mrs. Somebody's daughter.

She had a sixpenny, with which she was going to buy a pinny, and 'ank'chuffs, and a quantity of other desirable objects.

Belstone stands on the ridge overlooking the cleave, peering straight down to the Taw. On the

other side of the ridge is the East Okement—where, in spite of years of depredation, you may still find the osmunda fern. The highest and wildest and most beautiful parts of the moor are all within easy reach; but of course in the village itself there is a distressing number of visitors.

Across the valley, Cosdon lifts its great multi-coloured bulk exactly in front of the windows. I have one particularly happy memory of Cosdon. We were some three-quarters of the way up, and, stopping at a small pile of rocks, in the mad joy of the moment we burst into a performance of an oratorio of our own devising—basso and soprano solos and all. It was finely executed; and the impromptu libretto was a pretty piece of work. Then we went on. Behind the rocks we came upon a little party of whortleberry-pickers, looking into Africa like Mrs. Jellaby. So very embarrassing.

As you follow the course of the Taw into the moor, the valley widens. Cosdon is still on the left; the Belstone Tors rise on the right. The end of the valley is blocked by the superb pyramid of Steeperton Tor. At its feet lies Taw Marsh—a majestic open tract, surrounded by great hills, the river flowing through it deeply, and for the

moment silently, before it plunges between the little cliffs which gradually grow into the deep cleave.

What men dare do! The moors about Yes Tor have long been annexed by the War Office for artillery practice. That one feels to be a necessary evil; but some few years ago a monstrous scheme was launched for flooding large tracts of the moor for electric light purposes. There were to be about six great reservoirs—one in the basin of the Teign, another in Taw Marsh. The good people of Belstone raised a tremendous to-do about it, and mercifully the tragedy was averted. Anyone who has ever seen Taw Marsh may reckon for himself whether the amenities of modern civilization can ever warrant the destruction of a place as beautiful as this. A dam fifty feet high was to be built beside the Irishman's wall.* The neolithic village on the side of Cosdon (where you may still pick up flints sometimes) would perhaps have escaped submersion, but all over the moor hundreds

* A ruin of wall some seven miles in length. It was built more than a hundred years ago, and was an attempt to enclose the moor on a vast scale. When the wall was nearly finished, it is said the people of Belstone and Okehampton stepped in and spoilt it, having no mind to be cut off from the exercise of their rights on the moor.

of antiquities must have perished, just as thousands have been destroyed by earlier improvements.

The Belstone people had hardly emerged triumphant from that affray before another and more frightful scheme was started at their very doors. It might well have been argued in the previous struggle, that a lake of water is always beautiful (which is quite true; look at the Paignton Reservoir between Holne and Hexworthy): but what of a quarry and a stone-crusher in Belstone Cleave opposite Ivy Tor? That was the scheme produced shortly after the war by the kind of people who use stone-crushers.

Again the Belstonians called meetings, composed protests, and subscribed lavishly. One devoted matron invited a cousin of mine to sit with her upon the rocks on the fatal day when the first charge of dynamite was to be exploded. My cousin very properly rejected this form of protest ("and any way," she said, "I wasn't going to be blown up with *that* woman!"), but fortunately such measures were rendered unnecessary, and the stone-crusher is now making day hideous round the corner, on the Okehampton road.

Look at it—and picture it in the cleave!

Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to our Heart's Desire?

I think so.

VI

Manaton is a strange little village, gathered around three sides of the village green, and looking across cultivated fields to Hayne Down, where Bowerman's Nose stands up like a huge grotesque idol; which, indeed, the early antiquaries believed it to have been. Behind, the ground falls away into Lustleigh Cleave, where the Bovey River hastens beneath overhanging trees, and prattles by Horsham Steps. Beside the beautiful road that makes for Bovey Tracey and Newton Abbot are Becka Falls, where the stream tumbles through the woods to join the Bovey. At both these spots the scenery is so true to artificial reproductions that one hardly believes in it. Becka Falls particularly is like a "woodland scene" in a pantomime. Horsham Steps I connect with a grievance. There I met a wasps' nest. There, also, friends broke faith with me, who had pledged their honour to bring tea.

In Manaton churchyard stands an aged cross with

a peculiar history. It used to be the custom at funerals to carry the coffin three times about the cross before entering the church. A certain rector, who abhorred this paganism, did all he could to stop it; but he preached and argued in vain. Then one night the cross disappeared. Every likely spot was searched, but no sign of it was ever discovered. A damnable piece of vandalism.

In 1910 a man engaged on repairing the church bells noticed a cross cut in a stone forming the foundation of a wall, a quarter of a mile from the church. The stone was found to be an aged cross, with one arm lopped off. It was erected in the original socket in the churchyard,* but whether it was *the* cross or some other which had suffered a similar degradation is not certain.

The practice of carrying the coffin round the cross was certainly a relic of barbarism—its original object being probably to mystify the spirit of the departed, and to mislead him when he tried (as he surely would) to return to his old haunts. I have often wondered if the people of Manaton had not good reason to cling to their superstition. The road that leads past the churchyard from Easdon to Manaton is the most unearthly road at night that

* Since moved to a spot near the west door.

ever I stepped on. I once mentioned this to three or four persons. Two of them agreed, and the third said, "Oh, *of course*, it's haunted." I wonder if "that's what comes of it"—quashing good old customs. I like to think so.

Near Manaton there are some fine bits of the moor. Hound Tor, a very dramatic pile of rocks, is close by. From certain aspects the rocks look like great dark hounds peering over the hill. They say locally that these are the Wisht Hounds—mere stones by day, but,

When the wind whistles cold on the moor of a night,

a ghastly pack a-hunting.

Superstitions are very ready to lay their hand on likely material. The rocks are like hounds; but there is another explanation of the name. Risdon records that in the reign of Richard II. "little Manaton and Hounter were the lands of sir Hugh de Hounter." As in those days folk usually took their names from places, this would not necessarily argue that Hounter derived its name from the Knight; it merely proves that Hound Tor was once Hounter. Whether the meaning is the same I cannot say.

At Hounter Farm, nestling beneath the Tor, there lived once on a time, or so tradition says, one

Bowerman. He is supposed to have built a church at Manaton, and to have named it after his daughter, Winifred. Many antiquarians believe, however, that it was named after Winfrid or Boniface, the Devonshire saint and the Apostle of Germany.

Bowerman is also said to have erected Bowerman's Nose. Another legend states that the Nose is Bowerman himself, petrified there for hunting on Sunday. What Sabbath-breakers these Dartmoor people were! They never learned their lesson. Petrification was rife.

Hey Tor and Rippon Tor are to the south. The biggest shock I ever remember was (surprisingly) given me by Hey Tor Rocks—the Mecca of char-à-bancs. I had bicycled many miles in glorious sunshine to spend the week-end at Manaton, and when Sunday dawned with mist and fog, I set forth undeterred, with two companions, to walk by well-remembered paths to Hey Tor. As we neared the top we could only see a dozen yards in front of us, and we were casting about to find the rocks. I took a step forward, and suddenly, where before there had been nothing but grey mist, the huge black rock thrust out its ugly face, towering above me.

It was like being trapped. I remember swiftly twisting about and looking the other way, with that sense of shock, only worse, that you get when you take a step that is not there, or do not take one that is, or drink coffee under the impression that it is tea, and all those horrid things.

But that was not a genuinely evil fog. When the mists are really thick on Dartmoor, that is a terrifying moment—when rocks loom up, and vanish; and when the silence of this shadowy world is broken by indistinguishable sounds.

1ST STRANGER. Who walks with us on the hills?
2ND STRANGER. I cannot see for the mist.
3RD STRANGER. Running water I hear,
Keeping lugubrious tryst
With its cresses and grasses and weeds,
In the white obscure light from the sky.
2ND STRANGER. *Who walks with us on the hills?*
WILD BIRD. Ay! . . . Aye! . . . *Ay!* . . .

Above Hayne Down is the magnificent ridge of Hameldon, stretching for a great distance in a line due north from Widdecombe. In a cairn on Hameldon a bronze knife with an amber handle and gold pins was found. On the other side of the ridge, close by Headlands Farm and underneath Hookney Tor, is Grimspound, one of the most interesting and most perfect of the antiquities of Dart-

moor. It is a large circular enclosure girdled by a double wall. The entrance, which is paved and has steps down into the pound, is still solid and dignified. Within there are twenty-four hut circles, one of which has been partially restored, showing the cooking hole, hearth-stone, and raised stone couch. One of the huts in the pound possesses a double bed.

Opposite Grimspound, on the ridge by Challacombe, a little stone row with a great deal of character stands against the sky. Beyond and to the right are the Vitifer Tin Mines, and behind them is the High Road, and The Warren Inn, and Postbridge.

The Warren Inn is the scene of a famous Dartmoor story:

One very cold winter a guest at the Inn, inquisitively peeping inside a chest in his bedroom, was horrified to discover a corpse therein. He rushed to his host, who received the news with equanimity. It was "ole feyther," he explained; for many days past the ground had been too hard to dig a grave, and so "us salted un down."

Postbridge is chiefly remarkable for its bridge, which is pretty enough; and chiefly admirable for its fine central position on the Dart. The old Lych Way started from here. Along this road the

corpses rode on their final journey to Lydford, where all moor funerals took place until, in the thirteenth century, Widdecombe was also licensed for the use of those who lived nearer it.

Widdecombe-in-the-Moor stands beneath immense hills. It is a little silent village. I hardly ever remember seeing anyone there, but no doubt during "the season" it is crammed with visitors. There is not, as a matter of fact, a great deal to see at Widdecombe, beyond the cathedral-like church, and its noble tower. It does nothing in these days to compare with those brave doings of the past on which its name relies.

The famous thunderstorm took place on October 21, 1638. Inside the church is a tablet engraved with a description of the affair in doggerel verse, together with much thanksgiving for delivery, and the drawing of many pious morals. After forty lines concerning this strange affair we come to the best couplet of the whole poem—a jewel of journalese:

> The different affection of people then were ſuch,
> That touching ſome particulars we have omitted much.

But on the whole the verses are not as amusing as one would expect. Prince, in his "Worthies of Devon," is much more entertaining:

"In the afternoon in service time, there happened a very great darkness, which still encreased to that degree, that they could not see to read: Soon after, a terrible and fearful thunder was heard, like the noise of so many great guns, accompanied with dreadful lightning, to the great amazement of the people; the darkness still encreasing that they could not see each other; when there presently came such an extraordinary flame of lightning as filled the church with fire, smoak, and a loathesome smell like brimstone; a ball of fire came in likewise at the window, and passed thro' the church, which so affrighted the congregation, that most of them fell down in their seats, some upon their knees, others on their faces, and some one upon another, crying out of burning and scalding, and all giving up themselves for dead.

"This our Mr. George Lyde was in his pulpit, and altho' much astonished, yet thro' Divine mercy, had no harm: But was a sad spectator of the hurt and sufferings of others, the lightning seizing on his wife and burning her cloaths and many parts of her body, and another gentlewoman by her in the same manner; but her maid and child sitting at the pew door had no hurt; another woman attempting to run out of the church, had her

cloaths set on fire, and was so miserably scorch'd and burn'd that she died the same night. One Mr. Mead had his head suddainly struck against the wall in his seat with such violence, that he also died the same night, no other hurt being observed, his son setting by him had no harm: At the same instant, another man had his head cloven, his skull wrent into three pieces, and his brains thrown upon the ground whole; but the hair on his head, thro' the violence of the blow, stuck fast to a pillar near him, where it remained a woful spectacle a long while after. . . . One man going out of the chancel-door, his dog ran before him, who was whirled about toward the door and fell down stark dead, upon which the master stepped back and was preserved. . . . There were in all four persons killed, and sixty-two hurt, divers of them having their linen burnt, tho' their outward garments were not so much as singed."

The best memory of Widdecombe will always be the tale of Uncle Tom Cobleigh and his seven friends at Widdecombe Fair. Seven I make them, for beside Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy, Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk,* there

* These names were all taken from residents at Stickle-path. The original Uncle Tom Cobleigh lived near Yeoford

is "I," the crafty fellow who borrows the mare. In pictures he is always omitted—I cannot imagine why. He engineered the expedition (or acted as catspaw to old Uncle Tom Cobleigh) and was the responsible cause of the whole sad business.

Friday came, you remember, and Saturday noon —but Tom Pearce's old mare never returned with old Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all. This was disturbing.

> So Tom Pearce he got up to the top of the hill,
> All along down along out along lee,
> And he seed his old mare down a-making her will,

with Uncle Tom Cobleigh and his pals the last sad witnesses.

And here I must join issue with an American artist—quoted with approval (strange to say) by the late Mr. Baring-Gould. This lady (at a loss for a rational explanation of the tragedy) has suggested that the borrower of the horse met a gypsy girl at the fair, rode off with her, and so oppressed the aged animal that it then and there "fell sick and died."

Avaunt this heresy! The lady is too clever. The story is neither so subtle nor so banal. Of course *the eight old rascals* tried to ride the mare

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Junction. His will was proved on March 14, 1794. See "Songs of the West" (Methuen), p. 6 of the Notes.

home from Widdecombe—the whole lot of them.* That would be enough for any mare—and when you consider that the first lap of the return journey was up Widdecombe Hill, it is clear that the poor beast must have collapsed at once. Widdecombe Hill is like the side of a house, and you can look right down to the village from the top—as did poor Tom Pearce on that fell afternoon.

Poor Tom! He was so affected by his loss that "he sat down on a stone and he cried"—and all the gentlemen of the chorus, who were responsible for the tragedy, had the honest good taste to join in with him in his lament.

The ballad deserves all its popularity, for it succeeds in being deliberately funny without in the least detracting from its supreme melodrama. The last three verses are superb.

But this isn't the end o' this shocking affair,
All along down along out along lee.
Nor, though they be dead, of the horrid career
Of Bill Brewer, etc.

When the wind whistles cold on the moor of a night,
All along down along out along lee,
Tom Pearce's old mare doth appear, gashly white,
Wi' Bill Brewer, etc.

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* Recently a village sign has been erected at Widdecombe, which pictures the ballad correctly.

And all the night long be heard skirling and groans,
All along down along out along lee.
From Tom Pearce's old mare in her rattling bones,
Wi' Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney,
Peter Davy, Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk, old Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all,
Old Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all.

Widdecombe Fair still exists, but it is not now an event of any importance.

VII

There are many who think the moors more splendid in their winter clothes than in the gorgeous apparel of July. For when those gay imperial colours fade, the crystal air seems to capture the brightness that has vanished from the gorse; and when the sun breaks through the flying clouds, the deep brown heather glints again with light, the pallid green of the grass-lands is clean and shining, the bracken glows on the hills, the river glitters.

I went to Dartmoor from the south one dim morning in November. As I passed the Exe the river was at full tide, all smooth and misty like grey satin. In a little sandstone cove a few empty boats lay motionless. Only the train was alive

that morning; and the train was only just awake.

At Exeter I changed to the bus which lumbers along the road to Okehampton. For a long way nobody seemed interested in our progress. We climbed higher and higher, swiftly bade farewell to the elm-trees, and drove noisily along silent roads fringed with oaks. We stopped at village pubs, but no one came to look at us. Scarce any wished to share the journey.

Then suddenly, from Whiddon Down onwards, there was pandemonium. It was Market Day at O'kampton, as they call it (hardly sounding the O at all). Everyone was going, and a few more than the bus would hold got in near South Zeal.

South Zeal lies quietly apart. The main road, which plunges suddenly down a steep winding hill before it reaches Sticklepath, looks right down upon the roofs of Zeal in the valley below, but passes round it. It is a weird little village consisting only of one steep street. Half-way down stands a little chapel and a beautiful slender cross. The inn is the Oxenham Arms, and not far away is the old house of that family, famous for their ancestor John Oxenham, and for their omen of the White Bird. Naturally enough, many invented visitations

of the omen have been recorded; but there are instances of its appearance which seem well attested. The "Transactions of the Devonshire Association for 1900"* records a case as late as September, 1891, when the White Bird was seen at Oxenham just previous to the death of a lady related to the twentieth-century owners of the house, and herself descended from the original family. The village is altogether a very peculiar place, and a proper setting for the legend.

South Zeal is only a mile from Sticklepath, and there a lot more marketers got in. I got out at the top of the hill, beyond the village, and made for Belstone. The bus sped on uproariously towards Okehampton.

Did I say that, though the old beliefs remain, the old customs have mostly disappeared? Okehampton, at any rate, has a pleasing survival in the Giglet Market, held on the first Saturday after Christmas, and advertised on printed leaflets for days before the event. Gigglet (or Giglot) is a dictionary word with no very edifying significance, but the "Market" is not in fact the brazen business its title might lead you to suppose. The folk are supposed to come to Okehampton from the

* Vol. xxxii., p. 84.

surrounding villages, and the boys to select the girls they mean to "walk out" with during the ensuing year—a courtship on a year's approbation, so to speak, with no obligation to keep your purchase. The market used once to be a large Fair, and all the men on the farms had the right to be let off work to attend it. The word "giglet" is also applied to a girl who has not yet been out in service.

At Belstone the moor was cheerless. Only the river shone through the thick wet mist; and since no amount of enthusiasm could prevail against that weather, I spent the rest of the day within doors by the fireside. Next day was clearer and I climbed up Belstone Tor, with two others, and a cockney dog, who loved it and thought he was in Paradise. The wind cut like a knife from the East over Cosdon, and we heard it screaming overhead as we climbed. On top, behind the shelter of the big rocks, it was quiet enough, and we could sit and look at West Mill Tor, just visible in a cloud of mist. Beyond there was nothing. Above us the clouds went galloping by, and every now and then the pale disc of the sun glimmered and faded again like some archaic magic-lantern.

We had returned to the path beside the Taw,

when suddenly the clouds, racing up over the edge of Cosdon, were broken. A patch of blue appeared. In a moment the vanguard of clouds had gone streaming onwards. None followed, and the blue cavity grew and grew. We fixed our eyes on the disc of the sun. It was glowing brighter, brighter. Then the last cloud sped past its face, and the moor awoke in a blaze of sunshine. The sky was a bright cold blue, like pictures you see of Palestine in a coloured New Testament. The grey rocks on the Tors had stolen shades of violet from the blue above them. The smooth grass shone. The bracken and the heather kindled. The pretty cattle and the sheep were all about us, and there was no one near but a man on Cosdon. He was rounding up some sheep—and just as he was looking down at us, the cockney dog regrettably decided to round up a few on his own. This was an error of judgment, as he subsequently admitted under duress. So we took him to the river, where the tiny cliffs might shield him from temptation, and played there till it was time to be home.

Late that afternoon we crossed the river and the bogs, past black impertinent-looking cattle, to where the ruins of the neolithic village lie between Metheral and Cosdon. As we got higher

up the hill we could see over the Belstone ridge to the heights beyond, which had been so thickly veiled that morning. About six hundred feet above us, and a little more than three miles away as the crow flies, were Yes Tor and High Willhays, their heads two thousand feet above the sea, clear-cut and inky black against a crimson sky.

Next day, all the way to Mary Tavy, the shady side of the road was still white with the morning's frost, though it was past one o'clock. The moor was jutting up cleanly and brightly on the left, the granite again tinged with that violet won from the frosty sky. Here and there a single golden blossom hung still upon the gorse.

For a long way we could see Brent Tor starting up ahead of us. It is only a thousand feet high; but standing as it does on the western edge of Dartmoor it is for many miles higher than any other hill to the West, North or South.

On the summit is a tiny church. The story goes that a man was once lost in the Channel, and vowed, if he came safe to shore, to build a church on the first land he sighted. When the banks of fog divided he saw the far distant cone of Brent Tor. And there he built his church—but not

without a great deal of opposition from the Devil, who made himself so objectionable that St. Michael was moved to heave a rock at him. The Devil, resenting this treatment, departed, and the church was dedicated in gratitude to St. Michael de la Rupe.

The church at Mary Tavy is very pleasing. Not that it contains work of any unusual interest—except the screen, which is new and yet comely. But it holds a great atmosphere of sanctity within its little walls. As at present arranged it gives a very complete impression of what the church might have looked like prior to 1550, before the Vandals of the churches destroyed so much of beauty.

A lovely little lane leads over the Tavy to Peter Tavy, where the country and the moor merge. Peter Tavy is a peaceful place. But the church is depressing. There has been here so great a destruction, and so barbarous a restoration. Around the churchyard is an immense circle of tall lime-trees—all bare and feathery like witches' brooms on this November day. In summer-time they must be wonderful, making the churchyard like a cathedral close, the air heavy with their scent.

From Mary Tavy a road takes you most of the

way to Tavy Cleave. At the end of the track you see before you a ridge—Nat Tor jutting out at the southern end, Ger Tor crowning the height, about three hundred feet higher and straight ahead of you. Steering a course between the two, but keeping closer to Nat Tor, is very easy going. The top is soon reached; and there below you lies one of the most startling scenes on Dartmoor.

Coming up to the ridge, Ger Tor looks like the logical conclusion of Nattor Down. Beyond you would expect another sweeping Down, drooping in gentle gradations. But there is no beyond. On the far side, the ridge falls steeply to the water, and Ger Tor, which had looked a mere pile of rocks upon the summit of the Down, is a dizzy pinnacle. Beyond is Hare Tor, higher again. Across the river is the vast convexity of Standon Hill, the part immediately above the water so sharply rounded that it rushes to the river like a hoop. Glittering on its rounded sides, that afternoon, were thin coats of ice, which the sun had not discovered.

I walked along by the water to where Amicombe Hill divides the river. The river is filled with brightly coloured rocks—all ruddy and orange where they are worn to great smooth slabs.

These at one place are bespattered with dark velvet patches of moss; and on one stone I found the lichen a vivid orange. At every step, the Cleave was full of the promise of mystery. Gazing upwards at the sudden heights above, I gleaned some inkling of the meaning of claustrophobia—not "how high are these walls about me," but "how deeply sunk am I beneath them." True, it was winter, and the garish colours of the moor were faded. But even summer, with her gold and purple, could not have dissipated that mystery, could not have peopled that desolation. Once Man lived here; and the ruins of his habitations lie still upon the flanks of the hills.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE SOUTH

I

The main street of Totnes rises sharply from the banks of the Dart, mounting the hill narrowly between dense lines of houses. There is no other street quite like this street. No two of the houses are alike. Slate roofs—mostly gabled—slant at all angles. Windows of every sort of shape gaze down into the street below. Many of the houses are faced with slates; and some of these have their first floors resting on a colonnade of pillars, which forms the Butterwalk—a covered way which has no ancient parallel in England except at Dartmouth and Chester. Some houses are Elizabethan, and though others have assumed a modern front, within they are panelled and plastered with work four hundred years old. The ancient East Gate still straddles the highway; and close by the warm red church arises among grey houses. Near them are eighteenth-century buildings, and queer Victorian

erections, some droll and some adorably pompous. But there are no neo-Georgian architectural jokes.

The church and the Butterwalk are just beyond the East Gate. A little higher the Plymouth road breaks off towards the right, but the line of the street twists away to the left, and climbs onwards. Suddenly the houses cease. Without warning or appreciable transition the main street of one of Devon's most famous townships plunges up beneath the shadows of one of Devon's most impenetrable lanes. On and on it climbs, steeper and steeper, narrower and more narrow, until the loose stones are left behind, and rough as a Dartmoor track the true rock heaves up through the surface. The high banks are shrouded with trees, oak and ash and hazel, and from their branches ferns are hanging, and ferns gleam in the shadows of the hedges. Where the green bank is cut away walls of red sandstone have been laid bare. This is Harper's Hill, leading over Windmill Down.

Presently a gate to the right discloses a sudden panorama, dipping and mounting and rolling away towards the heights of the moor, where the double prongs of Hey Tor stand sharply defined against the sky-line. I climbed here one August evening after heavy rain. Dark clouds were behind the

hills, frilled with pink where the sunset had touched them. In the valleys between were masses of trees, the darker green of the elms against the bright jade fields. Amid the evening mists the roofs of distant houses were gleaming, and the tower of a church stood dimly visible among the trees. A long stream of smoke showed where the train was flying along the valley towards Plymouth.

A mounded field on the left gives an even vaster view to the east and south, and looks down as well to the grey pinnacles of the red church below. Trespassing in these deserted fields, I watched the evening creep over the swinging valleys of Devon. In the field were nine sheep, and these, instead of fleeing before me, watched me with a deep emotion, and followed me about from place to place. From below there ascended the notes of the town band as it tootled in the twilight. The faint applause of clapping hands succeeded ; and a homing motor brayed upon the high road.

I returned to the lane. A late bird was piping sweetly, high in an ash-tree by the gate. Everything else was still. The lane was already dark, but at an opening in the hedge one blasted tree stood thin and grey against the evening sky. Then I went down among the slippery rocks into the dim

tunnel of the trees, and a startled bird flew suddenly screaming, scattering drops of recent rain.

Before bed I leant over the bridge and gazed at the river. The tumultuous Dart lay smooth and still, the centre of the stream bright with the mirrored sky, the water nearer the banks stained with the black pyramids of reflected trees.

II

Totnes is one of the most interesting towns in Devon. Its records go back to the earliest times, and in the imagination of some persons to a period more remote than that. To begin with there is the hoary legend of Brutus. He sailed up the Dart in the year dot, and leapt miraculously ashore half-way up the Totnes Fore Street, declaring as he did so that there he was, and there he meant to rest, and that this place (by way of a cockney rhyme) should be called Totnes. There are some who have doubted the authenticity of this tale in despite of a lump of granite which lies to-day imbedded in the pavement, and which claims to be the actual spot where Brutus came to land—a stone revered at any rate in Totnes, for on it the Mayor stands when he proclaims the accession of a new King. It certainly looks less interesting than it ought, and if an

invincible prejudice against the improbable compels you to reject this legend, there are other (and still early) evidences of the town's antiquity and importance. Skipping a few æons since the date of Brutus, there was a Saxon mint at Totnes, and in the Guild Hall may be seen several of the coins then made. At that time Totnes was a Royal Manor, but William the Conqueror, wishing to reward one Judael, gave it to him, and he built a castle on the mound where the ruins of the later fortress now stand. Early famous as a centre of the woollen trade, the town received its first charter in the time of King John. In 1295 Totnes was one of the six Devon boroughs to send a representative to Edward I.'s Model Parliament. He was one Johannes de Blakedon. At the next parliament the town sent two members, and continued to do so until disfranchised by Disraeli's Reform Bill in 1867. The town's most notable representative was probably Serjeant Maynard—born at Tavistock in 1602, and member for Totnes in 1640. In the Mayor's accounts there is an entry of four shillings and fourpence against September 10 of that year "for wine and cakes which were presented to counsellor Maynard." A famous lawyer, he was engaged in the impeachments of Strafford and

Laud, but was strongly opposed to the later excesses of the Civil Wars and the execution of the King. Under James II. he refused to be concerned in the prosecution of the seven bishops, and shortly afterwards was able to welcome William of Orange in an obsequious epigram familiar to every reader of text-book history.

During the Civil War Charles I. and Charles II. were both at Totnes, for there was much fighting in the vicinity of Ashburton and Dartmouth. Lord George Goring occupied the town for the King in 1645, but was ousted the following year by Fairfax, who was on his way to Dartmouth, having just captured Ashburton.

One of the most delightful things in Totnes is the Guild Hall—a fascinating building more like a farmhouse than the seat of local authority, with little lattice windows and sturdy doors, and part of the building faced with grey slates. It was once a priory, dedicated to two presumably holy but strangely designated saints, St. Sergius and St. Bacchus. Before it stand some modest stone pillars, forming a little loggia. These have been moved to this position in comparatively recent years. Formerly they formed a piazza in front of the church. The council-room contains splendid

Tudor moulding work, and among many pictures of worthies, amusing old local posters and other public curiosities, there is a picture of the old town bridge demolished some hundred years ago. It was a lovely thing, and greatly to be lamented.

The Mayors' accounts contain many delightful entries. It is pleasant to know, for instance, that £7 6s. 2½d. was collected in 1633-34 in fines for "drunkenes, swearing and other misdemeanours"; and that in 1643 somebody had to pay 6s. 8d. "for bloodshed of Weltchman." In 1660 "a poor seaman who came from the Barbadoes sold by Cromwell" was munificently presented with one shilling. A Dutch doctor who came in 1672 "from Chudley to see Mary Gildon's legge" did better. He got £1. Four years later 4d. was expended "for whipping Berryman's apprentice." In 1687 one Mordecai Cockey dwelt in Totnes. That in itself is a fact worth knowing. He was paid 5s. for "the Cryer's bell." In 1749 "Cursing two prophane curses" cost Mr. Knowling the sum of 4s. There had been a previous conviction.*

The church (immediately opposite the Guild

* For these and many other entries see articles by Mr. Edward Windeatt in "Transactions of the Devonshire Association," vols. xxxii., xxxiii., xxxiv.

Hall) is a superb building. Its famous stone screen is sumptuously carved, and coloured in gold and red and faded powder-blue. The gallery has been lost, but the church has many other remarkable features remaining—especially an immense staircase turret in the chancel, which used to lead to the gallery; a dignified wine-glass pulpit of uncoloured stone; and a particularly attractive brass candelabrum of early eighteenth-century workmanship. In the church may be seen the indulgence granted by Bishop Lacy to all who helped in the rebuilding in 1432; and in a niche in the tower, plainly visible from below, is a figure of the Bishop. Beneath him reads a reminder that he was the good fellow who built "thys tore."

On the cover of the font an incredible golden dove rests precariously upon a pineapple.

Opposite the south side of the church, on the far side of the High Street, is an Elizabethan house, bearing the letters N.B. and the date 1585. Here lived one Nicholas Ball, Mayor of the town in that year, and he it was who built out those slightly protruding pillars, paying the council fourpence a year for the privilege. Barclay's Bank, the present occupiers, still pay their fourpence for

encroaching on the public footpath. In March, 1586, Nicholas Ball departed this life, leaving a rich and attractive widow. During April, May and June, Mystress An. Ball mourned her spouse; but on July 19 the parish registers record her second marriage. The happy man was Mr. Thomas Bodley, citizen of Exeter, and founder of the great library at Oxford.

Near by is the Castle—its courtyard now a green lawn, planted about with trees. The curtain wall still rings it in, and away below it is the empty castle moat. At one side, on a high steep mound, is the ruin of the keep, its low battlemented walls surrounding a grassy ring. In the centre stands a tree, sheltering the small circle with its great arms. In the wall is a grim little chamber and two stairways. One leads nowhere, and one up to the battlements, where two small oaks have planted themselves among the stones. Birds are twittering always in their branches. Totnes lies below, its endless variety of twisting slate roofs a maze of lights and shades. Little columns of pale smoke climb above the chimneys. In the distance the smooth Dart shines as it winds between steep woods.

III

The country round Totnes is some of the fairest and some of the most hilly in Devon. The easiest road runs between high fields and woods towards Dartington. There is a very odd church at Dartington, an astonishing mixture of old and new—the old imported from an earlier church a mile away, the new built in to match—or not to match, as you will. It contains a very old font, a partly original screen, and a wonderful old pink door. A road to the right leads past the rectory (Froude's birthplace), and over the hill to where you may look across a green potato-field to the tower of the older church, standing lonely in his churchyard. Beyond it are the meandering slates of Dartington Hall, the seat of the Champernownes. It is most peaceful here. There is no sight or sound of man. Only the wind walks in the forest; and the mauve potato-flowers sway gently as he passes.

A little further, at the bottom of a steep hill, is Staverton Bridge with its many pointed bays, and the Dart below flowing smooth and deep. Upstream an island of trees divides the water. All around is green country. Near by a little railway station lies idle like a toy. At Staverton I passed

THURLESTONE, NEAR KINGSBRIDGE.

a man on a horse leading his cows like an Eastern shepherd. There was a dog, but he did not appear to be taking any part in the manœuvre. When the road divided the man whooped and whistled and the cows followed.

Staverton Church has—in shape—a perfectly lovely porch, square and low, with a rounded outer archway. Within is a much-restored screen, and a new gallery thereon which has been cleverly made and is an interesting endeavour to recapture an ornament originally characteristic of the Western churches, and now scarcely to be found anywhere. It can be entered by the original newel staircase. Not far away is Little Hempston. The church has a particularly pleasing tower; and here is a unique old parsonage, an untouched fourteenth-century building set about the four sides of a little court.

The principal show-place near Totnes is Berry Pomeroy. William the Conqueror gave this land to Ralph de Pomeroy, and his family held it till the Prayer Book rebellion in 1549, when the Pomeroys were mulcted for joining the rebels, and the land was appropriated by Somerset the Protector. It has belonged to the Seymours ever since. Of the Pomeroys' castle little more than the gate-house and the walls remain. The mansion of the Sey-

mours stands within—a vast place with mighty rooms and enormous fireplaces. It was destroyed, they say by lightning, shortly after its erection.

A lovely way leads steeply up a hill, and thence to the castle through magnificent woods, deathly still save when the elephant career of a char-à-banc shatters the silence. I was there one glorious August day, and climbing up the ruins of the gate-house tower I watched the trippers beneath me—this one shamelessly photographing his friends amid the ruins, another dispensing voluble and inaccurate information to a damsel whose hair was lamentably confined in the embraces of a yellow string-bag. At my feet was the slit for dropping the portcullis, and near were pleasant apertures for boiling lead and such-like defensive preparations for the discomfiture of intruders. I was beginning to think kindlily of these conveniences when it was time for the cavalcade to be off to look at some new wonder; and they departed trumpeting through the woods. Suddenly all was silent. I passed down a corridor and up a broken stairway to the top of the walls and looked across from the castle of the Pomeroys to the shell of the Seymours' Elizabethan home, a grey building garlanded with ivy. These ruins are widely different from the ruins at Totnes.

Those seem indeed deserted to Nature—a relic of a long past age. But these are only outwardly a ruin ; in spirit they are uncannily alive.

> All the great courts were quiet in the sun,
> And full of vacant echoes : moss had grown
> Over the glassy pavement . . .

but the wide windows looked out at me with great staring eyes, as though brooding on some ancient wrong. All around everything was quiet, but underneath the hill a river was singing, and in the recesses of the forest a dove cooed persuasively.

The village of Berry Pomeroy lies at the bottom of a steep hill, about a mile from the castle on the Totnes side. This was old Prince's parish for more than forty years, and probably he wrote his " Devonshire Worthies " here. The church has a very fine porch. Its principal curiosity is the Seymour Memorial. Lord Edward Seymour, his son Sir Edward Seymour, and Elizabeth Champernowne, wife of Sir Edward, lie semi-recumbent one above another in three tiers. Beneath them kneel five sons and four daughters. The eldest son bears a striking resemblance to his father ; but all the rest of them look half-witted. On one side of the lady a baby lies in a cradle. On the other a small queer

female figure sits in a chair. Some say she represents the family nurse; others that she was an idiot daughter. Her clothes are certainly more like those of a nurse; but her face suggests the idiot daughter. Perhaps she was an idiot nurse.

The chancel screen has been restored, and is a very splendid thing, richly adorned with gold which has only dulled into a lovelier shade. The windows are of clear glass and this greatly enhances the beauties of the church. Let vast abbeys and cathedrals bathe in the rich colours of luxuriant early glass; and let modern churches, devoid of traditional ornaments, shut out the sunlight with their muddy painted windows. How much more lovely is this church in its simplicity, the sunlight streaming in through crystal panes! Many of the little churches of Devon are lighted in this way. Staverton, I think, has only one coloured window—and that points the moral, for it is modern and as odious a thing as ever I saw.

Branscombe, near Beer, is another instance. This church is among the most delightful in the county. It stands in the middle of a long peculiar village, which straggles down the length of a steep narrow valley, concealed from the sea by high cliffs—one of the most inaccessible villages in

Devon. The church is cruciform, and its fortress-like tower is set in the centre, a formation unusual in these parts, and more often connected with cathedrals and large churches, or special buildings like college chapels. The belfry, therefore, stands between the nave and the chancel, its two pointed arches delightfully enhancing the perspective. The church is full of treasures: an interesting rough Jacobean screen—very brief, for it only needs to stretch across the opening of the belfry tower; beautiful sedilia and communion rails; an old three-decker pulpit; and at the west end a late Elizabethan oak gallery of great beauty. In the chancel is a lovely little priest's door, and near the porch an outside stairway leads in Eastern fashion to the gallery door. The porch is crooked, and delightful. Before it stands the tomb of Charity Lee, boldly claiming to have passed through "almost fivety years of most exemplary widow-hood."

These are but a few of the interesting things in this church; and above the pleasure they afford there seems a greater satisfaction in the contemplation of the perfect neatness, cleanness, and lightness of this place; which is at first surprising, for the church has remarkably few windows. These

windows, however, are all good (especially the east window, a magnificent piece of Perpendicular work), and they are nearly all of crystal glass which chase away the shadows. As you sit in the nave there faces you the great east window, and beyond its clear panes stretch the green branches of a lovely tree, forming a more suave design, I boldly claim, than was ever reproduced in stained glass. There are many richer churches in Devon than Branscombe; but there is none so peaceful or so bright, and this is largely owing to the absence of

> storied windows richly dight,
> Casting a dim religious light

—inspiring in great cathedrals, but only too often oppressive in little churches, and anyhow excruciating if badly executed. Here, lacking "the studious cloysters pale" and "the high embowed roof," it is as though this place has captured by its own bright simplicity the essential spirit of religion.

Just outside Branscombe is Slade House, a place with a prodigious roof which was specially constructed for storing contraband. The house also possesses a perfectly good daylight ghost of an old lady in a red shawl.

Walter Bronescombe, Bishop of Exeter, 1258-80,

was born at Edge Barton in this parish—an interesting house, although, of course, entirely rebuilt since those days.

IV

An early geographical primer, which I well remember, was wont to contort the infant mind by giving to each town a sub-title borrowed from some other place remotely similar. One would be called the Manchester of Ireland, and another the Birmingham of Belgium, and these titles I remember, although their real names have long ago been lost to me, together with the final decision on the rival claims of the Isle of Wight and Worcestershire to be called the Garden of England. Among many other such intelligences I feel very certain that my primer would have stated that the Dart was often called the Rhine of England. I never saw the Rhine—but they tell me that it winds about dramatically between steep wooded hills. So does the Dart, and if there are here no medieval castles perched upon the hill-tops, at times there will be a mansion gleaming in a clearing of the trees, or a little house remotely like a *chalet* standing by the water's edge—a picture like enough, no doubt, to make a com-

parison in our traditional English way essentially to the disadvantage of the Dart. But why make it? It is about as sensible as contrasting an oil-painting with a miniature. I prefer the stout insularity of Mr. Norway. He takes the weak remark that Tor Bay is like the Bay of Naples, and crushingly replies that "All English bays are like the Bay of Naples." So they are. If they were not fairly like it they would not be bays at all, but peninsulas or something else essentially dissimilar. "All English bays are like the Bay of Naples." This is a slogan we should cherish very dearly, for Englishmen do not often give vent to utterances a hundred per cent. British. So much then for Naples; and so much for the Rhine; for the Dart is far too splendid to damn with borrowed compliments. If its scale were vaster, it might be like the Rhine—but there lies the point. The thickly-wooded hills about the Dart are steep and high, but not tremendous. There is here nothing ostentatious; it is only the most cunning disposition of the best that typical English scenery can provide.

On either hand the country rises and falls in an intricate maze of hills. Hidden below their crests lie little inaccessible villages. I rode a bicycle

THE DART, DITTISHAM

once from Totnes to Stoke Gabriel, on to Greenway and across to Dittisham, and so back again by an infamous corkscrew hill to Tuckenhay and Ashprington. I was never more discomfited. The hills and the surface of the roads on that western side of the river are the worst in the whole county. Four times between Dittisham and Totnes the road goes up or down a hill of more than one in seven, and on one of these I endured the humiliation of being passed by a pedestrian I had left behind a mile away.

Stoke Gabriel (the name itself is worth a visit) is a perfect village, with the Church House Inn, that ancient hostel, exquisitely placed at the end of the cobbled walk leading to the church. In an oak-timbered room there I devoured one of the best and cheapest lunches it is my pleasure to recall, and afterwards sat replete under the short verandah, looking with satisfaction upon the closely huddled view of trees and roofs and orchards. Butterflies were chasing aimlessly abroad, and the birds were all singing. It seemed to me in that congenial hour the prettiest and the remotest spot in the world. In the church there have been many desecrations, but there is an interesting carved and painted pulpit, and an enormously heavy oak door. On the capi-

tals of the pillars by the chancel are queer crouching female figures. Outside is a vast yew—the oldest inhabitant doubtless among the trees, its many arms supported upon crutches.

Everyone knows how Chaucer takes the men of Dartmouth as the typical mariners of his age ;* and during many centuries his choice would have been equally reasonable. Always this river has been intimately connected with those adventuring upon great waters, and in the golden seafaring age of Elizabeth some of her greatest adventurers were reared upon these banks. Down the course of the river fresh hills arise at every twist to block the stream on each side with a paradise of trees. At one place where the river is widest the stream describes a rectangular twist so sharply that it suddenly appears a lake with no visible entrances or exits amid the trees and fields. Near here is Sandridge, birthplace of John Davis, and, as the crow flies, not more than a mile away is Greenway, the birthplace of his friends Humphrey and Adrian Gilbert. These three men were bent on the discovery of the North-West Passage. Davis discovered the Davis Straits in 1587, and explored Greenland, the Indies,

* A shipman was ther, wonying fer by weste ;
For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.

and the Pacific. Adrian Gilbert went with him. Humphrey Gilbert founded the colony of Newfoundland, after his third voyage to the Indies. On his way home his ships the *Squirrel* and the *Golden Hind* were caught in a tempest. The *Squirrel* was lost, and the last known words of Humphrey Gilbert have come down to posterity among the famous farewells of History: "We are so near to Heaven here at Sea as at land."

The Gilberts, of course, were half-brothers to Sir Walter Raleigh, and so it is only to be expected that Sir Walter should have smoked one of his many first pipes here—though it was odd of him to do it upon the Anchor Rock, which sticks up in the middle of the river below the woods of Greenway. Here the river is at its most beautiful—rimmed with flowers and screened by multitudes of tall trees. Certainly as high as Greenway Ferry fat porpoises go dipping by, splendidly diving for their prey. Cormorants, like ugly pterodactyls, are everywhere intent on maintaining their reputation for gluttony; and pleasanter birds are singing in the trees. Higher up is the finest heronry in the island, and as your boat goes skimming by, you see the solemn long-legged creatures like statues on the banks, waiting for the tide and dinner.

Opposite Greenway is Dittisham, with a pink house and a yellow one, and down by the water's edge a thatched cottage and the derelict hulk of an old boat. The woods rise up behind. There is a pleasing church here with an eccentric wine-glass stone pulpit, carved and painted, with queer saintly figures therein. One of them squints. The screen has apostolic fragments of colouring still lingering there, but it has suffered from applications of brown paint. There is also a Norman font, which was hidden for a century and a half in a field —presumably to save it from the Puritans.

Below Dittisham the river widens, and here are more and more things to see and remember. If you are on the river steamer an obliging man will point them all out to you in a bewildering stream —the creek where lies the mill which makes the paper for the Bank of England notes; and the Fire Beacon Hill where once the signal flashed the news of the Armada down the coast; the place where the Pilgrim Fathers rested; and Captain Scott's *Discovery;* and the destroyer belonging to the Royal Naval College above you on the hill. And so, among a maze of little boats and greater —the big red funnel of the ferry-boat and the short black ones of the little tugs, the sails snow-white

KINGSBRIDGE

and russet-brown, the masts and the rigging framed between the hills against the background of sky and water—you pass between the twin towns of Dartmouth and Kingswear, their ancient castles guarding each side of the harbour mouth as the river swells to the sea.

V

There was a time, as everybody knows, when the seafaring towns of Devon ranked with the first in the kingdom. To-day the only world-port is Plymouth. But whereas most of the others—Topsham and Kingsbridge for instance—have degenerated into sleepy country townlets, Dartmouth is still a busy harbour of much local importance. Chaucer's couplet is really the neatest proof of its early fame; but for those who like hard facts, there are other evidences. More than eight hundred years ago William Rufus was sailing for Normandy from this port, and Richard Cœur de Lion embarked here when he joined the third Crusade. King John—who always turns up everywhere—was twice at Dartmouth. In Edward III.'s reign no less than thirty-one ships were sent to the siege of Calais. In 1470 Warwick embarked here for the Continent, after Edward IV. had chased him as far as Exeter

in his flight from the battle of "Lose-coat Field." During the Civil Wars the town was taken by Prince Maurice, and held by Sir Edward Seymour and Sir Hugh Pollard; and Charles II. spent a night here in a room in the old Butterwalk—an arcade greatly more picturesque though not so long as the Butterwalk at Totnes. The fort at Kingswear was held by Sir Henry Cary; but both places were finally reduced by Fairfax in 1646. That closes the history of Dartmouth as a war-centre until the date of the last conflict. I heard visitors reflecting the other day on the beauty and tranquility of Dartmouth. "These places down here knew nothing of the war," they said. The kindly stranger who is bursting to put you wise with his more accurate information is very tiresome, so I did not break into their talk and tell them how the harbour mouth is strewn with the wreckage of some of the worst torpedo disasters of the war, how the Dartmouth fishing fleet is even now reduced to a quarter of its pre-war size, and what the wreckage costs those that remain in nets and fishing tackle.

Newcomen Road (named after a Dartmouth worthy, famous as an early experimenter in steam-engines) leads down towards the castle—a fascinating little place, eminently defensible, full of

DARTMOUTH AND KINGSWEAR

loop-holes and conveniences for boiling lead; and possessing an oubliette for shooting prisoners down to the rocks beneath, where the waves with their cold white crests are always waiting for their prey. From the castle a great chain used to be stretched across to Kingswear Castle as a defence against French pirates and the like. The steps, half submerged in the water, to which you look down from the battlements, are those which Warwick trod when he embarked for France in 1470.

A road which runs above the castle leads to little coves, delightfully modelled, deep-set in the cliffs which tower above them, covered in trees and greenery. From the road you may look back across the tops of trees to Dartmouth, clustered in a bunch of brown and grey about the water's edge. Kingswear, more trim and less interesting, mounts sedately on the other side. Even at night when the water is empty of actual traffic the whole aspect of the place is busy and alert. But see Dartmouth in the morning, from the hill above the station at Kingswear! The ruffled water, part blue and part pale green, spangled with boats of every size and sort, yachts and barges and multi-coloured cockle-shells: in the distance the dark green woods and, over the way, with her roofs

shining in the sun, and every window trained upon the river, Dartmouth watching with a thousand twinkling eyes. Dartmouth has preserved its ancient dignity; it is modern and yet old houses line the streets; it is old and yet bustling and alive.

The church of St. Saviour is one of the most interesting in the county. The screen is a lovely satisfying thing, and it is pleasant to see the rood restored thereon to its rightful position. The carved stone pulpit is even more attractive. It is so gay and tall, and poised so nicely on its slender stem. The oak gallery across the west end of the church destroys the proportions of the building; but it is exceedingly handsome. Its date is 1635. Better than anything else I like the arches—the two pointed ones resting on the western pillars (which are earlier than the rest of the church), and growing very queerly into comfortable rounded arches, decorated with little faces and shields and flowers.

The old south door is a most remarkable affair—an oak door of date 1631, bearing ingenious iron-work upon it which is said to be three hundred years older. Here are two lovely beasts fitted to rank with Epstein's birds in some new-created

BABBACOMBE, TORQUAY

world of Nature. Their faces are like men's, but their bodies are like tigers, and they have tails like enormous flails. They are stalking about beneath the shadow of a broad-leaved tree—described by one authority as an oak, though I see no evidence in nature to support that theory. I think it is just a tree—a monstrous thing the artist thought it would be fun to make. The wild design links the old workers with the impressionists of to-day and expounds a fundamental truth in art. Most gloriously may the man who wrought this claim the name of Creator, and hold his head above the centuries of artists who have never learned better than to copy the work of another.

VI

Due north of Dartmouth is the stretch of seaboard which contains so sudden a cluster of well-known places — Brixham, Paignton, Torquay, Newton Abbot, and Teignmouth. Each of these places has its glories, for even if there is little of interest to see or know about in the more modern of them, they are all placed amid splendid scenery. Given the necessity for watering-places, you could not have one more attractive than Torquay. Paignton makes almost one town with

Torquay, and cherishes the delusion that Miles Coverdale translated the Bible there. Outside Newton Abbot is Forde House, where William of Orange stayed on his way to Exeter. Teignmouth is about five miles lower down the river, in a setting of great beauty. This town has had an exciting past, for it started a precedent for being sacked long before the Conquest. The Danes began it, and the French pirates kept it going, and the habit was not dropped until the Dutch, as late as 1690, had burnt the town during their brief command of the English Channel. Keats came here in 1818 to stay with his sick brother, and the revision of *Endymion* was made here. Some rather skittish verses of his called "The Devon Maid" are often quoted. I believe he betrays a more sincere appreciation in "Some Doggerel" which he sent in a letter to B. R. Haydon, finally summing up:

> Then who would go
> Into dark Soho,
> And chatter with dack'd hair'd critics,
> When he can stay
> For the new-mown hay
> And startle the dappled Prickets?

Certainly in these days he would find no prickets at Teignmouth; for this bit of coast has altered

vastly in the last century. A hundred years ago Torquay was a mere village. But though the coasts are populous the country is all beautiful, and full of interesting things—Compton Castle, for instance, and Haccombe, the seat of the Devon Carews. Haccombe is the smallest parish in England, and its rector is the sole arch-priest now remaining in the country. By virtue of his office he still remains free from the jurisdiction of his archdeacon.

The construction of Brixham is precisely the reverse of that of Dartmouth. Dartmouth lies alongside, parallel to, the water. Brixham is built down a valley descending at right angles to the sea. The result is that Dartmouth as a whole is infinitely more beautiful to look at; but, on the other hand, that part of Brixham which is grouped about the quay makes the most dramatic piece of town-planning in the county—a startling climax to the long town which has straggled down the valley almost from the hilltop to the sea. All the houses have clustered in a bunch, making a complete semi-circle round the harbour, which is not wide across. Four tiers of buildings rise one above another—queer tall houses, chock-full of windows, and scarce any of them a bay. The best will in the

world could not allow these houses individually to be handsome, but their structure is so queer and their position so strategic, and their concentrated gaze rests so jealously on the buzz of life along the little quay, that Brixham seen thus is certainly unique, and possesses a dramatic beauty entirely its own.

A road above the harbour looks across Tor Bay to Paignton and Torquay. Between the quay wall and the breakwater lie innumerable ships, a few of them little boats, but most of them carrying the brown masts and rigging of the famous Brixham trawlers. Among them in the summer will be gleaming yachts, decked with flags, down here for the regattas. Beside the quay is William of Orange's statue. This particularly pleases me. It was erected in 1888, and is not at all what you would expect from a sculptor of that period. It is bold and impressionistic—his hawk eyes amazingly well delineated. There the Dutchman stands, looking as pompous as he can breathe, and very like, I feel sure, to the usurper who landed here on Guy Fawkes Day, 1688.

VII

West of Dartmouth are the South Hams, fine typical country, scattered all over with pleasant villages, each with its local legends of the great families, smugglers, wreckers, and the escapes and concealments of the Civil Wars. But there is not much of national interest attaching to their histories, and the chief glory of the South Hams is their general level of quiet beauty. In this county there is so much of spectacular scenery. The South Hams are rather what we mean by typical Devon, a green deep country of hills and hedges and pasture.

The coast, on the other hand, is very wonderful. A famous road takes you through Stoke Fleming and along the cliffs until a sudden dramatic descent brings you to Slapton Sands, a narrow beach two and a half miles long which barely divides the sea from Slapton Lea, a freshwater lake fringed and planted with coloured rushes—uniquely lovely in the sunshine, weird in the driving rain, magical at nightfall. I remember I saw it first at about half-past six on a November evening, when the twilight had almost faded. On either side the stars shone down upon a sheet of glimmering water. The

humble motor-bus that bore me seemed suddenly transformed into some amphibious monster, crashing through the waters of a lost lagoon in some far tropic country.

At Tor Cross the road dives away at right angles to find Kingsbridge in the midst of the lanes. Kingsbridge is very queerly situate—some five miles from the coast, and yet at the head of a deep sea creek which is not the mouth of any real river. Long years ago Kingsbridge was an important trading centre, but the creek has silted up a lot, and Kingsbridge is now marooned at the head of a muddy ditch, useless for the navigation of any but small boats. As the estuary broadens it branches off in many directions where the lateral brooks have cut their way down to the creek, so covering with its waters and its marshes a large area of mysterious-looking country. Near the mouth of the creek is Salcombe—only three miles off as the crow flies, but more than double that distance by road.

Salcombe is comparatively modern, but there was a castle here which Sir Edward Fortescue held for Charles I., and which resisted longer than any stronghold in the county. The place has an ancient savour about it anyway, chiefly due, I

think, to the aspect of its steep narrow street, which descends sharply in a direction parallel to the water, displaying the houses—to their great advantage—at queer angles. Beneath the little street the estuary swells out like a lake, blue as the Mediterranean, surrounded with hills and wooded clefts. All around on the mud banks lie crowds of gulls and boats of many colours. Little sailing-boats pass with snow-white sails and some with sails of crimson, dipping and circling round in the confined space like things pleasantly demented. On the hill opposite the little village of Portlemouth is sprinkled, with the square tower of the church standing above.

Above the town the road climbs up through a deep grove of trees. From the top you look across to the dignity of Bolt Head, marking the start of some of the finest coast scenery in the south, and some of the most dangerous.

Modbury is the only other town of any size in the district—a queer little place and very pleasing. It used to be the seat of the Champernownes, and there is a tale of them which everybody tells but is not the less good for that. The Champernownes had a private band of singers and musickers, which so delighted Queen Elizabeth that she desired to

borrow it for a month. Mr. Champernowne endeavoured to evade the invitation, as he feared to lose his band if it pleased the Queen too well, and in any event he did not want the expense of sustaining it at court. Accordingly he gave a polite refusal, but the Queen was so angry that she contrived somehow to sue him at law and mulct him of so many manors that the Champernownes of Modbury were practically snuffed out; which was a pity, as they were the elder branch.

Modbury is separated from Plymouth by twelve miles of splendid country. Plymouth itself is nothing to make a song about, although a great number have been made, for merely as a collection of houses it is an ugly town with few visible evidences of greatness past or present. But Plymouth is something more than a collection of houses, for it is bound up in its setting, is designed to look across the water where the Sound lies in the embrace of lovely coombs stretching past Mount Edgcumbe and Cawsand Bay in a long perspective down to the open sea—a sight which ranks among the world's most beautiful. I have already refused to re-hash the story of the great Elizabethans, but the catalogue of the men who sailed from the port of Plymouth is proof enough of its exclusive fame. I

BOLT HEAD, SALCOMBE

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suppose there is no place of such historic greatness within the whole wide Empire. Between 1528 and 1601 forty famous voyages of discovery set sail from this harbour—the earliest being that of old William Hawkins to the South Seas. Then was the age of Frobisher, Davis, the Gilberts, Grenville, Raleigh, the Hawkinses—Sir John and Sir Richard—and Drake. All these and many more sailed from Plymouth, to seek the fatal North-West Passage, to find Newfoundland, Virginia, and Guiana, to scour the South Seas and the Spanish Main, to circumnavigate the world, and often to meet death at last upon a foreign soil or amid the hurricanes of unknown seas. In September, 1580, Drake and the *Pelican* returned to Plymouth after the most famous voyage in history. In 1588 the fleet stole out from the Sound to shatter the invincible Armada. In 1595 Drake and Hawkins sailed out on that last West Indian adventure from which neither came back again to Plymouth Hoe. In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers finally sailed from the same port, and landing in New England on December 21, baptized their first settlement with the name of Plymouth. There are said to be forty Plymouths in the world which have taken their name from the Plymouth of Devon. It is as

though each one commemorated one of the forty expeditions. Nor has the lust for adventure perished yet in Plymouth. Captain Scott was born at Devonport; and recently a statue was raised there to his memory, and to the memory of those who went with him to the South Pole.

Drake was Mayor and Member of Parliament for Plymouth as well as chief adventurer; but despite these homely offices, he will always stand apart as a lonely mystical figure, different from his contemporaries, a hero of legends like Odysseus. He organized the town's water-supply; but, it seems the way he did it was by speaking an incantation over a Dartmoor stream, and then riding into Plymouth with the brook flowing obediently behind him. Once when his wife was too readily interpreting one of Sir Francis' long absences as an excuse for a second marriage, he shot a cannon-ball from the other side of the globe with such accuracy that it landed between the lady and her future spouse, and determined them to abandon the ceremony on the ground that Sir Francis must obviously be living. There are many other equally remarkable tales of him; for it seems that all Devon conspired, from the moment of his departure, to believe that here was a magician, an

PLYMOUTH FROM MOUNT EDGCUMBE

heir to King Arthur, a deathless hero, ever with his people waiting till the great day of battles. Everyone knows the legend of Drake's Drum.

> If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,
> An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago.

In the time of the war there were many ordinary normal persons who recalled that story with emotion. During a critical period the daily and weekly press devoted a deal of space to the affidavits of men from the battleships in the Channel who swore that they had heard the rolling drums of Captain Drake, and taken heart again. There is indeed a finer inspiration in this legend than ever there was in the Angels of Mons. And from all we know about Drake, it certainly illustrates a truth. The rustic faith in him was not founded on little. He was the arch-adventurer, not only lion-hearted, but uniquely self-possessed and original. There does seem something supernatural in the man who calmly steered his little boats into Cadiz harbour, fought a battle, and returned again unscathed; and on another occasion, set to sea on a raft to find his ships under the very noses of the Spaniards. His enemies roundly declared that the man was possessed of a

devil. His countrymen believed him to be inspired and invincible. Sometimes one gets a little weary of the emotionalism which prostitutes itself in ceaseless flowery praises of the tough Sea Dogs of Devon. But it is a pity if this leads us to sneer at the story of old Francis and his drum. It is the most picturesque, and the most stimulating, although I suppose the youngest, of our legends. It stands alone with that gloriously ornate belief of the Germans—the belief in old Frederick Barbarossa, sleeping and waiting till the call comes, in his cavern in the Black Mountains.

THE HAMOAZE, DEVONPORT, FROM MOUNT EDGCUMBE

CHAPTER V

A CIRCULAR TOUR

A SHORT time ago I took the road upon a bicycle—not one of your modern motor contraptions, but an ordinary old-fashioned push-bike. There were many little inconveniences to surmount—rain and tempest, and hills that were never built to push a bicycle up. Indeed, as Risdon confesses, "This county, as it is spacious, so it is populous, and very laborious, rough, and unpleasant to strangers travelling those ways, which are cumbersome and uneven, amongst rocks and stones, painful for man and horse; as they can best witness who have made trial thereof. For be they never so well mounted upon horses out of other countries, when they have travelled one journey in these parts, they can, in respect of ease of travel, forbear a second." That is a hard saying for these days; yet travelling, as I was, in the early Edwardian mode, its truth was appreciable.

I do not repent my enterprise. The further

we depart from the locomotion of our ancestors, the less are we acquainted with beauty. The exigencies of the railroad condemn it to follow the courses of the valleys, and to burrow beneath tall hills. The motor-car exists only upon the high road—where it clips the hedges low, not to disclose the view, but to unmask the corners. But the horse and the human legs will take the traveller by the path he loves best; and next to these for convenience comes the bicycle. Thus, though the vulgarism "push-bike" became for me a platitude, my tour had many compensations. Of the which I have set down some in the form of a diary, concocted from stray notes I then made.

Thursday.—To-day I rode to the Exe and crossed in the ferry-boat to Starcross, where the common high road runs beneath the Haldon Hills.

Ten days ago by using the train, the bus, the ferry and my legs, I described a circle of thirty-two miles around these parts. On Haldon the great rains had turned the bracken rusty before its time. It stood clumped by the roadside in masses of red and brown, and here and there a single frond of green. Through the dark screening fir-trees it was

beautiful to watch the sun glitter on the trees beyond, some all yellow with autumn, others still green and undecayed. And where, on the hill dropping to Starcross, the ground slips away to the left, tumbling by trees and ferns in a sudden descent plumb to the peaceful meadowland beneath, the mingled colours were beautiful, flaming over the serene green below.

I never saw waters more subject to magical changes than the waters of the Exe. That day, passing the river in the morning, the Exe had been sheeny and misty, like a lagoon at daybreak. Coming across it that evening it was radiantly bright—around the boat an oily blue, like petrol in a puddle, and where the slanting sun fell upon it, like thousands of mackerel dancing. Exmouth glittered over the water Mediterranean-wise. The little boats were all like birds upon the river, dissolving in mists by Powderham.

A week later I was passing again by the Exe The river was full, and ruffled, and blue as steel. And now to-day the water was bright and mirror-like, reflecting only the gold rays of the sun. It is amusing to reflect that Exmouth, the fashionable seaside watering-place, with its villas and shops, its amusements and populous sands, was once

sacked and burned by the Danes. The Danes were up the estuary several times. I wonder how the river looked that day when Alfred the Great raised the siege of Exeter, and the Vikings fled down the river to the sea. Was it in the soft grey mists of morning? Or at sunset when the water glows so brightly? Or was the tide beginning to retreat, and did the mud flats shine mysteriously on either hand?

Mysterious—that is the word. The Exe is mysterious; and her sister Otter, five miles eastward, whence I started in the morning, is even weird, where her marshes spread down to the sea. Not a bit like either of these is the mouth of the Teign. The mystery which hangs about the other two rivers is largely due to the breadth of their valleys, and the meanness of their immediate ramparts. But the Teign has no eerie flats, and the hills rise fairly on either bank, friendly and typically British. As I gazed across the river here, the line

In England's green and pleasant land

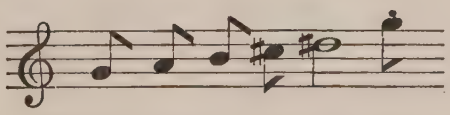
flew into my memory. Then I set off up the valley towards Newton Abbot and so to Ashburton —the bright grass-lands continually about me, sometimes with woods and little brooks, but more

TORQUAY FROM PAIGNTON

often just fields—typical farm country, with the green relieved occasionally by a ploughed field or a patch of glorious blue cabbages, but not darkened by plantations of exotic firs.

I passed scarce anyone on my way, but I remember with joy a young maiden of about four years who met me just outside King's Teignton. I had dismounted. Quoth she, "What's wrong wi' yer bike?" And deeming my paternal smile insufficient reply, she followed her question up with "Eh?" and prepared to inspect for herself.

Her Devonshire pronunciation was classic, and her delicious ascending scale so sung itself into my ears that I tapped it out on the piano, and set it down on paper. Here it is:



What's wrong wi' yer bike? Eh?

A passable *motif* for one so young; and particularly illustrative of the chief characteristic of the dialect —its lilt.

The granite and the slates of Ashburton make the place a little grim. It is a jolly little town in the sun with everybody talking; but it must be a

sad place under grey or weeping skies. To-night, however, it was gay enough. It was election time. I went to a Conservative meeting and sat among a knot of friendly and facetious Reds at the back of the hall. I also heard about it all afterwards from my landlord, a pillar of the local Conservative cause.

Why are innkeepers always pillars of the Conservative cause? Not entirely because the Conservatives are the true anti-prohibitionists. Observe the pomposity of the man. It is because he knows somewhat of power, and figures on committees, and realizes what property is. There are less than three thousand souls in Ashburton; and there are, I believe, fourteen inns. So it is "very probably possible"—to borrow a fine non-committalism used by my hostess—that here be fourteen pillars.

Earlier in the evening I had a long chat with an old lady who was also a pillar. As a matter of fact nearly everyone declared themselves pillars that night. This particular bastion discussed with me the "Colation Government." It had evidently afforded her cold comfort. She was also in that happy position, dear to the hearts of all West Country folk, of having recently gone through "a

lot o' trouble." I heard all about that. Her late husband, it appeared, had also been a pillar.

Friday.—I was early at Buckfast Abbey this morning. Here is an interesting place — the earliest religious foundation in Devon, dating at latest from the last half of the eighth century, and perhaps originally founded by the early Celtic missionaries. Under the changing rules of Benedictines, Savigny, Cistercians, it soon grew to much importance, for it had great possessions, and the Cistercians were the best people to develop its resources. It was they who founded and fostered the woollen industry, which survives to this day, at Ashburton and Buckfastleigh. Edward I. visited the Abbey in 1297; and here King John stored the crown jewels during the Irish wars.

On February 25, 1539, Gabriel Donne, last Abbot, consented to the suppression of the Abbey —and received in return an annuity of £120. The bells of the Abbey Church were bought by the folk of Buckfastleigh for £33 15s. They still hang in the Parish Church.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a mansion was built on the site of the Abbey, which had been dismantled and destroyed long before. In 1882 this house was bought by some French

Benedictines, expelled from their own country by the French Government. On October 28, the first mass since the Reformation was said at Buckfast. Shortly afterwards they began the colossal work of excavating the foundations of the Abbey. There was one brother in the community who had some knowledge of building, and in 1907 this solitary mason commenced the task of rebuilding the Abbey upon its ancient foundations. Other brothers joined him, but at no time have there ever been more than six masons at work together. Yet on August 3, 1922, the building was far enough advanced to be inaugurated for public worship by Cardinal Bourne. It is a wonderful achievement. The cloisters and refectory and dormitories are built. The west front is in process of erection; and the full nave will soon (1928) be open to the public. The whole, the spire excepted, will be completed within the next four years. The monks are not impatient. For them Time means so little. The work will be finished. If not in their lifetime, then afterwards.

On the west side of the cloister is an irregular room believed to be part of the original Saxon church. Without, the "Abbot's Tower" still stands. In the choir there is a chair and linen-fold panelling

brought from Kingsbridge, once an important place in the Abbot's demesne.

One expects at Buckfast (quite unreasonably) to be transported through the centuries. But the stones are not weathered, and at present they are white and staring. The Abbey has a modern continental look.

> Dark-cowl'd Benedictines haunt the pillar'd shade,

but they cannot preserve the illusion of the Middle Ages. And yet—perhaps they do. How strange it is that imagination persists in painting medieval times in colours borrowed from survivals—cathedrals grey with years. In medieval days these hoary buildings were new and clean as Buckfast is to-day. Most of us think of the Middle Ages in terms of a splendid ruin—just as many people conceive the eighteenth century as a period consciously "picturesque"—as though its beautiful clothes and furniture, and its rosy brick houses, were all part of a colossal exhibition for the greedy pleasure of twentieth-century antiquaries.

After Buckfast to Holne—Kingsley's birthplace—a little grey village perched on the edge of the moor. Here is a thirteenth-century church with a pleasing tower and porch. Within is a fine trussed

beam roof, a splendid carved and painted screen and a crooked wine-glass pulpit in wood, less spectacular but more lovely than the famous stone ones.

From Holne I clambered on to the moor, following the road to Hexworthy above the Dart. It was misty up here, and I did not stay except to enjoy the wonderful scene from Combestone Tor, hard by the roadside. From here you may look down to Dartmeet, and back along the course of the united river, as it turns and twists its way towards Holne Chase. Beyond the river Sharp Tor and Yar Tor stood mistily. Below the hill a brook fell bustling down a ravine, the hills on either hand grass-green and bracken-brown. All the way up, its banks were thick with brilliant rowan-trees, covered with berries. By the roadside a large tree of it was standing.

Thence I went on to Hexworthy, and doubling on my tracks, over the West Dart and down to Dartmeet. I had forgotten how steep Dartmeet Hill is, and many times I was glad to pause to look back to the river and its reredos of many-coloured trees, and to see the West Dart winding down its valley before the meeting of the rivers. Once I stopped to draw a hasty sketch near by a moor pony. The pleasant beast eyed me all the

time with great interest, and soon, unable to restrain his curiosity any longer, he drew quietly nearer and nearer to examine the phenomenon.

At the top of the hill I paused to look at that wonderful view of the Tors—Yar Tor on one side, Sharp Tor and Mel Tor on the other, Bel Tor ahead; and across the river the track where I had been an hour before, and the Paignton reservoir shining on Holne moor. Then I went down into the shelter by the steep hill to Ponsworthy, where I picked up a pretty rustic who rode with me towards Widdecombe. He told me with pride that in summer he "thought nothing of going to Torquay."

A fine place that is, to be sure; but, perversely, I think of it as most lovely when night has shadowed its natural beauties—when a blue light marks the eastern point, and Brixham glows across the bay, with the lights of Paignton shining on the water near at hand. Above, the creeper-covered mound is set with lanterns, like "in the tree-tops" in "Peter Pan." Dartmouth is more lovely still at night—its lights twinkling so high in the air, you would almost think them stars.

At three o'clock I got to Widdecombe, and lunched at the "Old Inn"—pretty modern, by the

way, with its wooden refreshment hut at the back. Cheered, I struggled up Widdecombe Hill. From the top there is a glorious view of Hameldon*—one of the noblest of the ridges on the moor. Over and beyond you can see Dartmoor stretching into the mists.

From Bonehill Down to Ashburton is a most amazing ride. But on no account reverse the journey. At first you go along a ridge with Hey Tor ahead of you, then with Top Tor and Pil Tor on your right hand, and presently Rippon Tor on your left. Then the road dips over Buckland Common, and rushes down to Ashburton, a total drop from 1,312 feet† to 254 feet. I think I only got off once, for a very short rise, in the whole of that descent of more than a thousand feet.

I had been out about seven and a half hours, and had covered twenty-five miles, having walked six of them. Five times I had been over a thousand feet; twelve times up and down slopes of more than one in seven. I had touched 1,312 feet. I had sunk on one occasion to 150 feet.

And so to dinner and more politics.

* Hameldon Beacon, 1,697 feet. Hameldon Tor, 1,737 feet

† Top of Bonehill Down.

NEAR BUCKFASTLEIGH

Saturday. — Looking upstream from Holne Bridge, the Dart is all pother and foam as it twists into sight after serpentine volutions through Holne Chase. The banks are thickly wooded with every tree from golden beech to blue-green fir. Beyond, the woods tower up in a peak above the water.

Below the bridge, the river is suddenly dark and placid. Trees bow low across the stream, and the bridge is too high to see far beneath their fringes. To the left, beyond a meadow, an arm of the woods stands up like a wall. So tightly are the trees massed together only their tops are visible; and save where the blue fir presses through like an arrow, they are like foam, all pink in the first glow of autumn and the pretty light of early morning. Along the road, higher up, you can look down again on the river, twisting round the corner, broad and argumentative. Beyond are the feathery tops of Holne Chase.

At the summit of the hill you must gaze over the chase to Buckland Beacon, and down on to the ruinous Leigh Tor by New Bridge, where the Dart emerges from the woods again. It is a temptation too great to be resisted. Although I was bound in the opposite direction I dived down the hill, and stood at length by Leigh Tor to watch the Dart

beneath me, the woods along its banks, and, above and beyond, the hard cone of Buckland Beacon against the sky. The bracken here was red, not brown, and bits of it were gold.

Then came the necessary retribution, the climb back to the top of the hill, and higher again to the ghastly road that passes Hembury Castle on the way to Buckfastleigh. As I rode along this ridge, the flank of the hill across the valley on my right was absurdly like a titanic quilt—each little valley buttoned down, and bouncing up promptly to be pinned down again. The hill that descends from here past Buckfast is like the dried bed of a river —alternate sands and rocks. As the brakes were nearly jolted from my hands, a man sang out to me, "You'm past the worst of un": which he seemed to think very funny. It was rather.

Buckfastleigh is not interesting; and here it began to rain, so I hurried along the road to Dean Prior. Here there is a lovely row of fine old cottages and some new ones by the wayside. First there are great squat square chimneys; then there is thatch and moss; then windows jutting out from heavy old slates, and moss again; and below, a long slate porch running the whole length of the row.

An avenue of trees lines the highway as you come to Herrick's church—chestnut, and Spanish chestnut, lime, and oak. The church is depressing, and though it has been altered since Herrick's day, instinctively one feels here something, which may have been the cause of some of the gentle poet's "Discontents in Devon." Unless it were the rain outside which angered me, for which I felt (as Herrick would have put it) "The Extreame Scabbe take it": which it did, for presently it stopped.

By selecting carefully a few suitable extracts, it is possible to prove either that Herrick was miserable in Devon, or that he was contented. For me the test of sincerity divines the answer. Herrick was clearly a creature of hot susceptibility; but no one accuses him of hypocrisy or dishonesty. How then can we dodge the crystal sincerity of his "Thanksgiving to God, for his House"? I have seen this quoted by critics, who at the same time insist on his misery—preferring a theory founded on a literal translation of the lines

> A people currish; churlish as the seas;
> And rude (almost) as rudest Salvages,
> With whom I did, and may re-sojourne when
> Rockes turn to Rivers, Rivers turn to Men;

to the positive benevolence of

> And yet the threshold of my doore
> Is worn by'th poore,
> Who thither come, and freely get
> Good words, or meat.

Herrick is not the only man who has called the Devon men "Salvages." One has heard the charge even in these enlightened days, and from no unfriendly lips. In the seventeenth century to call them rude would be merely to state a fact. It is easy to picture Herrick indulging fierce animosities, and yet able to write thanksgiving from his heart.

Let us have it in full. After all, "hackneyed" is but a vulgar label for excellence.

> Lord, Thou hast given me a cell
> Wherein to dwell,
> A little house, whose humble Roof
> Is weather proof;
> Under the sparres of which I lie
> Both soft, and drie;
> Where Thou my chamber for to ward
> Hast set a Guard
> Of harmlesse thoughts, to watch and keep
> Me, while I sleep.
> Low is my porch, as is my Fate,
> Both void of state;
> And yet the threshold of my doore
> Is worn by'th poore,

Who thither come, and freely get
Good words, or meat:
Like as my Parlour, so my Hall
And Kitchin's small:
A little Butterie, and therein
A little Byn,
Which keeps my little loafe of Bread
Unchipt, unflead:
Some brittle sticks of Thorne or Briar
Make me a fire,
Close by whose living coale I sit,
And glow like it.
Lord, I confesse too, when I dine,
The Pulse is Thine,
And all those other Bits, that bee
There plac'd by Thee;
The Worts, the Purslain, and the Messe
Of Water-cresse,
Which of Thy kindnesse Thou hast sent;
And my content
Makes those, and my beloved Beet,
To be more sweet.
'Tis Thou that crown'st my glittering Hearth
With guiltlesse mirth;
And giv'st me Wassaile Bowles to drink,
Spic'd to the brink.
Lord, 'tis thy plenty-dropping hand,
That soiles my land;
And giv'st me, for my Bushell sowne
Twice ten for one:
Thou mak'st my teeming Hen to lay
Her egg each day:

Besides my healthfull Ewes to beare
Me twins each yeare:
The while the conduits of my Kine
Run Creame, (for Wine.)
All these, and better Thou dost send
Me, to this end,
That I should render, for my part,
A thankfull heart;
Which, fir'd with incense, I resigne,
As wholly Thine;
But the acceptance, that must be,
My Christ, by Thee.

Was Herrick a hypocrite? Then he was also a blasphemer. If you can go behind this, you may discount anything, and you cannot reasonably cite his testimony in support of one theory or another. It is significant, too, that the discontented poems are all believed to have been written round about the year 1647—the date of his ejection from his living.*

I was now riding along the Plymouth road under the southern slopes of Dartmoor. These are not very impressive. Brent Hill is only just over a thousand feet. Ugborough Beacon is only two hundred feet higher. The Western Beacon at Ugborough shelters Ivybridge, and there I lunched

* See "Robert Herrick," by F. W. Moorman (Bodley Head, 1910).

close where the Erme plunges beneath the high road in spectacular gyrations. I never saw so small a stream pretend so brazenly or so successfully to importance. The boulders are not rocks which might be shifted with tolerable ease to another position, but a solid protuberant rocky bed, which heaves up hugely where it will.

From Ivybridge I rode to Plympton, and thence, by indifferent roads and steep (though not high), I cut across to the Plymouth-Tavistock road. Plym bridge spans a very different picture from that I had seen in the early morning at Holne. Here were no rocks, and no dense profusion of trees—but a Spanish chestnut, green and yellow, and beeches, brown and gold, hanging caressingly over the water. At one place above the bridge, where the water was very smooth, a pool of colour lay gold-green, reflected from the unruffled branches.

The Plymouth-Tavistock road is one of the finest in the county. Westward you look across the Tavy and the Tamar to Cornwall, and from Roborough Down you have a wide view of the western borders of Dartmoor. From Yelverton the road swoops down into the wooded valley of the Walkham, which the railway crosses on a high viaduct—from the road a sight positively pleasing,

for it seems to float on the tree-tops. Then there is another upward toil, and another sweeping descent into Tavistock.

It was dark when I got there. But the town was very much alive, full of rapid Devonshire chatter, uproariously joking about nothing at all. In the bar, in the streets, was the same hubbub. There was to be an important election meeting that night, and everyone was rehearsing their arguments with partisans of the opposite side.

After the meeting I sat in the bar and listened to the talk. It was all very exhilarating and the occasion of prodigious drinking. There was a specious Red, who, with adroit arguments, was endeavouring to bewilder a mutton-headed Tory. The Tory, however, carried the day. The Red unwisely said something disparaging of the present-day ex-soldier. After six years I suppose he felt that the claim to immaculateness had been weakened. Not so. The Tory perceived his chance, and staved off all further argument until closing time by banging his fist on the table, and waving his arms in the air, in emphasizing his inability to argue with a man who had said something derogatory of the men who won the war, of whom, he, the speaker, was one. Many minutes

ON THE CORNISH BORDER, NEAR TAVISTOCK

were exhausted in apologies and recriminations. They told me afterwards that the late war was the only argument in Ole Bill's bag of tricks, and that, in any event, he would have dragged it in somehow.

After closing time I talked awhile with my host and hostess. They were monied folk who had bought the business a few years back—strangers in the land—understanding about as much of Devonshire character as they did of the moors at their gate.

There really are some people who are brought by solitude to Coleridge's epitome of fear:

> Like one, that on a lonesome road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And having once turned round, walks on,
> And turns no more his head;
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread.

Such a one was my hostess at Tavistock. "Oh yes," she said in awful confidence, "it's all very *beautiful*—but I wouldn't live nearer it for anything!" It must have been instinct that prompted her terrors. It certainly was not reverence, for she thought the Tors, which have been fashioned by wind and weather during thousands of years,

had been piled up by man "a hundred years ago or perhaps more"—a feat which indeed excited her admiration. "Isn't it *wonderful* to *think* how they got them up there!" said she, going one worse than the pseudo-archæologists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, who at least attributed Nature's statuary to the Druids, and were thus many hundreds of years less wrong than she.

These importations from London and Liverpool and such-like places neither understand the people nor try to do so. They laugh indulgently with the visitor over the ignorance of the folk—missing that instinctive sensibility which takes the place of learning, and dubbing as incurable rusticity what is in fact a pure humour of rare quality. But there—what can you expect of a man, who, after living several years in Tavistock, assured me I could not get to Clovelly without going to Bude?

Sunday.—To-day I started on an adventure into the unknown, riding from Tavistock to Hartland by way of Lifton and Holsworthy. This is a distance of forty miles, crossing that part of Devon which is least known, and least likely to be known for many a day.

The ordnance survey maps of the district make an interesting study. The Great Western Railway

goes from Tavistock to Lifton and on to Launceston in a loop, which runs up as far as Lydford before it turns back westward towards Cornwall. Consequently the ride from Tavistock to Lifton is across country unshadowed by the railway. Westward from that road the isolation is even more remarkable. You may draw a line from Lydford to Bodmin without it going anywhere near a railway.

The Southern Railway's line from Launceston to Holsworthy keeps within tolerable distance of the road for about eight miles, but for the last six miles the road and the railway are far apart. Then comes an extraordinary hiatus. From Holsworthy northwards to Barnstaple Bay there is no railway at all; for the line runs on westward to Bude, and the other nearest station in North-Western Devon is Torrington, as the crow flies about thirteen miles away from Holsworthy. Nor is it likely that any railway will adventure across this tract of country; for only the tiniest villages are besprinkled over its face. Some day perhaps a coast line may run connecting Bideford, Clovelly, Hartland, and Bude—but that would only enclose this wide open space. As it is, Hartland claims in all England to be the village furthest from railways,

with Bideford and Bude her nearest stations, respectively sixteen and nineteen miles away by road. Thus may she long remain, for assuredly with the advent of Clovelly Junction the last times will be upon us.

But more than this. If you look at the ordnance map you will see that three miles north of Launceston the broad red mark which betokens a "main route between towns, good and fit for fast traffic," changes to the sign of the next grade—"fit for ordinary traffic." There is no other road of the first class till you come to the north coast and the road between Bideford and Clovelly Dykes. Before you reach Holsworthy the route has sunk to the dignity of "other roads, fit for ordinary traffic"; and, unless you are going to make long détours for the sake of argument, eventually you are bound to plunge into a network of "roads under 14 feet wide," sometimes marked as "fit for ordinary traffic," but more often as "indifferent or winding." In the whole set of ordnance maps of Devon there is no section so free from roads, towns, and contours, as this north-west corner (Sheet 127). If you spread that sheet out among its fellows, and look from them to it, the contrast is as surprising as turning from brown to white.

It was across this wide green desert that my road lay.

The road to Lifton only passes two small villages, Rushford and Chillaton, in the course of nine or ten miles' rambling. At first the road is uninteresting—pretty enough, but the same as many other miles in any other county. As I was reflecting on this unworthiness, the road suddenly began slipping beneath me faster and faster, and when, half a mile later, it turned abruptly at right angles, I realized I had been quick to carp. The hedges went streaming behind me, and now a third was barring the way; and I seemed about to breast it and go ricochetting down two hundred feet into a still sequestered valley below. And then the road turned giddily back to its original direction, and I was riding parallel with the valley which had been at my feet a moment before—a lovely little glen, with broad slopes clad in fern and bracken, and little trees about the banks of a stream.

The road was still steep, and the picture flicking past my eyes, as I ran down into Chillaton. First I passed an old black sow, taking her walks abroad; then there was a mill-wheel, and the brook cascading under a bridge; and then I was

at the bottom where the road forks, and the village clusters about the junction of the highways. There was not a soul to be seen. Four dogs—one a hound puppy, the others of a breed indeterminate —held converse at the parting of the ways. They, and the sow, and a hen or two, were apparently the sole inhabitants of the village. But presently a boy, and then a girl, came out to see; and then a man, and then a woman: who, weighing the matter, and judging me not really worth their contemplation, immediately withdrew again.

It takes two hills to make a valley—there's the rub of bicycling in Devon—and presently I was again climbing painfully up the side of the ridge which bounds this valley and another coomb beyond. The hedges were high on the top of the hill, so I clambered up one of them to look back at the little sudden valley, and the silent village I had just left. It had disappeared. A few outlying houses I distinguished—and I saw *a* valley which I took to be my valley: but it was filled only with trees, and the road by which I had come to it was gone. At once the memory of little Lucy and Mrs. Tiggywinkle came flooding into my mind. As a matter of fact, I believe I thought of Lucy as soon as ever I saw the valley; and,

naturally, when I found what had occurred, it all seemed the sort of thing one must expect. There were cows in the field across the road, and they looked at me with interest and surprise—gazing this Sabbath morning at a village which had vanished, looking for a road which had never twisted into this valley of mystery. They simply were not there. Hopefully I looked at my ordnance map. But no: the road was marked.

Beyond the hill, nothing was hiding Brent Tor. Four miles to the south-east, and five hundred feet above me, the familiar conical hill was standing, crowned with its little church. Some hills cut off in this acute isolation would seem overpowering, oppressive. Brent Tor is serene and untroubled, a sign of hope to the country all about it.

Another sweeping hill took me down to Lifton, and I paused on the bridge where the united waters of Lyd, Lew, Thrushel, and Wolt are coursing down to join the Tamar a mile further on. This is a great strategic point of the western rivers—for the Tamar has just gathered to itself the Kensey, the Ottery, and the Carey. And soon the Inney and the Tavy will join it too, and the Lynher at the last moment will swell the waters that rush to

Plymouth Sound. No other river in the county unites so many streams in so sudden a bundle.

Close by the bridge the trees of Lifton Park were rising, straight and golden green, in a high mound above the lodge, from whose chimney a tall column of clear blue smoke mounted unwaveringly. Complete silence reigned everywhere. The whole village was at service. But as I reached the church, out they came, passing the time of day, and gossiping with each other, and looking with undisguised curiosity at the foreigner who wished to enter the church after the service was over.

Lifton Church is very beautiful, and very interesting with its double dedication to St. Mary and St. Peter, evidence of which you may see on the cornice of one of the pillars dividing the south aisle from the nave—an M facing one way and the cross-keys facing the other. And here is a good instance of a tower with pinnacles built to lean outwards instead of upright. This is a Cornish idiosyncrasy, which is shared by some Devonshire churches near the border. The effect is very peculiar. The battlements seem to lean both ways at once—to squint in two directions. It is most disturbing, and, I think, not beautiful. It has been conjectured that this peculiarity was an attempt

THE TAVY, TAVISTOCK

to reduce the resistance to the wind. At Lifton I learned a more romantic explanation. They say it is the Crown of Thorns.

The road from Lifton to Holsworthy, along a ridge dividing the Carey and the Tamar, runs at no great altitude, and with no sudden ups and downs, through very ordinary country. It fastens itself on the memory, however, by reason of its great loneliness. Occasionally a house or two stands by the road, or the tower of a distant church marks where the cottages have clustered nearer the river; and halfway there stands an inn. But, in fourteen miles, the road passes through but one village—Clawton, three miles from Holsworthy. Beside the road there are few trees, and sometimes the fields give place to marshes and moors, where tiny tributaries spring to feed the Tamar, the Deer, and the Carey—country on the whole insignificant and unattractive, though once I passed a field of red-brown rushes as lovely as ever I saw.

It was here, after three and a half days on the road without mishap, here upon this lonely road, and on Sunday too, that disaster overtook me, and I sprang the inevitable puncture. I had within my saddlebag a beautiful outfit designed for emergencies of this nature. Patches, rubber-solution, French

chalk—everything was there. I had also a fine collection of instruments and tools and oil cans; but unhappily I had never achieved a mastery over them. In the heat of youth I had sometimes attempted to mend punctures. Getting the tube out was easy; finding the hole in a bucket of water was amusing; and putting on a patch gave a feeling of workmanship entirely satisfactory. But show me the normal man who can put the tube back again. Sometimes, it is true, I achieved that end with a final and triumphant jab of the spanner; but, invariably on those occasions, the tyre would remark "phut," and sink wearily before me. When I took it to the shop, they would say, ridiculously, that I had pinched the tyre with the spanner, and punctured it again somewhere else; which was discouraging. Anyhow—had I intended to mend the tyre myself—where was now that indispensable bucket of water? There was indeed nothing for it but to proceed to Holsworthy, by now something under three miles away.

"Proceeding to Holsworthy" is done as follows. You blow up the tyre as hard as it will go, and holding the pump still in your hand (for you will need it in a moment) you leap precipitantly into the saddle, and pedal downhill as fast as the

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wheels will carry you. After a hundred yards a loud bumping is heard. You then slow up and proceed upon your rims as long as your conscience will allow. When conscience speaks, you dismount, and walk until you consider the ground suitable for repeating the process.

In this manner I entered Holsworthy, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, seeking food and succour.

Holsworthy is built upon a spur of land rising between two streams, and the street which leads up to the plateau, where the most of the town lies, is very steep, mounting between grim blind-looking houses, like a street in some Northern mining district, and unlike anything I ever saw in the friendly West. But the people made up for the ugliness of their town. The bicycle shop was shut, of course—but no one seemed to doubt the man would do the job for me if he were at home; and when I found he was out, two men severally offered to mend the puncture for me. This done, I roused the good lady of an inn and was given an excellent high tea, while the lady herself delighted to tell me that she had had a "lot o' trouble," and had recently buried her husband and her daughter.

Two miles beyond Holsworthy is Chilsworthy.

From there to Hartland is about fourteen miles. In the course of that ride I saw five persons—all during the last lap: a man in a car near Brimford Bridge, a pedestrian at Meddon, two men outside the West Country Inn, and a farmer a mile from Hartland. I have never before met with such an absence of mankind in cultivated country and broad daylight. It was Sunday afternoon—and these lanes too remote even for courting couples!

Two miles from Bradworthy I turned aside to the left by an "indifferent or winding road," as the map termed it. The scenery all this time had been extraordinarily dull for Devon, but after I had adventured some two miles along my lane, a wonderful change took place. The road became worse and worse. Great pools of water stretched across the path, and on either hand there suddenly arose deep fields of rushes. I was crossing the sources of the Tamar and the Torridge; and lovely it was to find them at that hour. Acres of rosy-brown rushes were covering the pale green moor, which stretched into the dusk on either side of me; and as I jolted down the road to Brimford Bridge I seemed to be sinking into the sea of their bronze sheaves, which quivered in the evening breeze, and glinted to the last lights of sunset.

By the time I had reached the highest point of these moors—742 feet only, at a spot just above the West Country Inn—it was almost dark, and it began to rain a fine misty rain. There is no road from here which may be said to go direct to Hartland. You may advance for two miles to left or right, over Bursdon Moor or across the ridge of Welsford Moor; but after that you must plunge into a labyrinth of twisting lanes, and adventure towards Hartland by instinct. The road by Welsford is the better, and along this I went, between the eerie wastes of moor, in the darkness and the rain, and without a light, steering an elliptical course towards food and shelter and dry clothes.

It will be generally allowed that man recalls the memory of his misfortunes with mirth and tenderness. The great majority of pleasant things lie sunk in one comfortable recollection of a general happiness. But let a car break down in a thunderstorm five miles from anywhere—and the tale of the struggle to restart is told anew with echoing guffaws each anniversary. And again it seems an exquisite joke to remember how someone trod on the butter, or left the lunch-basket in the train at a picnic party—though clearly, in both these instances, here was an act calculated to excite the liveliest

resentment. For similar reasons I cherish a memory of the last four miles of my ride to Hartland. But suffice it that I got there, and was comforted.

Monday.—Hartland is a real village. The houses are not always beautiful, but they are always suitable; and here you may hear Devonshire spoken, and meet with Devonshire manners.

About a mile to the west is Stoke, a tiny knot of pretty cottages indissolubly connected with Hartland, for it is here that Hartland's church of St. Nectan stands.

The road thither descends with some steepness to a beautiful wooded valley, where are the grounds of Hartland Abbey, an ancient foundation of the Austin Canons (the only Abbey in North Devon) which, through the passage of stormy centuries, has come at last, like so many another, to bear the outward form of an eighteenth-century mansion. Till 1780 the dining-hall, which was more than seventy feet long, and the cloisters, and the old belfry tower, were yet standing; but these all perished during alterations.

As the road mounts again on the left flank of the valley, a little stream flows below you on the right, and across a broad open meadow are the trees which sweep around to circle the Abbey

directly in front of you. As you ascend the hill, the church tower grows above the trees, very stately and mysteriously. A little higher the hills divide and run down to make a little bosky valley. In the open cleft glitters the sea. On the hilltop above, the splendid tower of the church gazes across the Atlantic.

Hartland parish is the second largest in Devon ; yet of so wide a congregation there are but half a dozen cottages sitting beside the lych-gate, where the six gnarled lime-trees stand, three each side of the way.

The church dates from the end of the fourteenth century. Its principal glory is its rood-screen, *circa* 1450, which stretches the whole width of the church —the largest screen in the county. The intricacy and resource of its vine-leaf design is incredibly beautiful. It is so splendidly preserved that it entirely lacks that subtle aura of a beautiful antique, too fragile to touch, which emanates from so many screens, which have been saved from the wreckage of time and vandalism. Here is something intensely solid, something living, something which the church has in nowise outlived, to care for it like some decrepit dependent. Here is not a relic of the Middle Ages, patched up and restored to ape its

ancient purpose—but a portion of the church's structure as reasonable as the roof or the tower, and as much an integral part of the church to-day as it was four hundred years ago. So sad a desolation has been wrought in most of our churches that a complete impression of this reasonable purpose is not often to be gained. But here, at Hartland, there is no suggestion of any other idea. Here is an English screen performing a normal and simple function.

The church has many other interesting features: a Norman font of the twelfth century; a carved stone altar converted from a tomb, originally brought from the Abbey; and a splendidly diverse roofing—part open-timbered, part finely carved and gilded and coloured, part plainly panelled, and another part plastered and painted with gaudy stars, red on yellow and yellow on blue. I like these stars. Often such decorations in churches are grotesquely vulgar; but these are pleasing stars, these were wisely done.

After its treasures have been examined severally, there is yet something more wonderful in the contemplation of the whole of this remarkable church. I think its final and particular appeal springs from the always apparent loftiness of its

LOOKING ACROSS THE TAMAR TO THE CORNISH SIDE AT COTHELE QUAY

design. Seen from without the tower soars upwards with an almost visible motion, as though endowed with something of that divine purpose which causes Giotto's tower to leap to meet the sky. Within, the belfry opens on the nave through the most gracefully springing arch I ever saw. Stand about two yards within the screen, and thence survey the nave. The broadly spanning arches taper at their base, and the effect is lightness, for the pillars being slight and few suggests that they have little weight to carry; and at the end of the arcade you look again upon the fragile grace of that inspired arch cut through the strength of the tower.

The north porch looks out on two old crosses, heading the descent into the woods that grow down to the valley. This morning the rain was driving past the open door, and from the sea the wind blew ceaselessly among the trees.

The memory of my bicycle in the rain by the lime-trees drew me at length from the church, and when I had found a kind soul to shelter it, I set off over the hill to Hartland Quay. It had stopped raining, but the sky was grey; and grey as steel was the Atlantic. In the mist, to the north, Lundy heaved up its great bulk. To the south,

the clouds were breaking over Cornwall in silvery streaks.

A gentle slope of grass leads down to Hartland Quay. Less than fifty years ago they built a pier here. The sea has entirely devoured it. No stone of it remains upon another. That is a sobering reflection. But only to look upon these coasts suffices; you need no yarn of wreck or tragedy to adorn your instinctive comprehension of what they are; for to see is at once to understand that here is a favoured port of call for Mother Carey. Look at them—the rocks, jagged and black, running out into the sea in sharp files, or starting upwards in knife-like edges and vicious-looking teeth, or lying level with the shore in a crumpled petrified stream between the sand and the sea. Down the coast the headlands run one behind another in incomparable succession, with a curious mauve colour in the dark faces that they turn towards the sea. They are completely uncompromising, entirely merciless—without a doubt the most dramatic cliffs of Devon.

It is a generous provision of Nature which has granted close at hand so perfect a contrast from their magnificence. Turn inland and mark the difference—how each black head is capped with

fair green grass, and brightened with gay heather. The extraordinary cone of St. Catherine's Tor is close beside you. Mark its ruined, battered, grisly face. Then take the path that winds behind it, and contemplate its comfortable back, and notice, away to the right, where the heather is brown, and the bracken red, and the gorse still glowing. All the way to the south the stern faces scowl across the water; but their gentle backs slope softly to lovely valleys: and I see them now a virgin green and blushing with the bracken.

From St. Catherine's Tor I walked over the hill to where Speke's Mill-stream cascades over so beautiful and interesting a fall; and then up the track through its delicious valley, and back across the fields and by bad wet roads to Stoke.

I was clambering over a tall hedge with some difficulty, when a labouring man hailed me—I thought to abuse me for destroying the hedge; but not at all; he wanted to help, and himself cut away the great brambles which were painfully obstructing me, and helped me back to land. He was the first living being I had seen for a long time. Down by the sea there had been no one. Only two piebald pigs were roaming on the grass by Hartland Quay; and in a rough stone shelter

by the waterfall two simple-looking donkeys stood, practising that virtue of patience which they have made peculiarly their own.

Before I left Stoke a few rich gems of conversation came my way. Of Hartland Point* I was told, "Oh! it's all right, you know, for anyone who's never been there before"—Hartland Point, mark you, being the strategic centre of these grand cliffs, commanding from Morte Point near Ilfracombe to beyond Padstow. This prompted me to ask the maiden I was talking with for her opinion of Clovelly. Her answers were evidently made from one mould, for this time she replied, "It's very pretty, you know, for anyone who's never been used to it." Wise critics of the English are fond of pointing out that odd mixture of emotions, which makes the Englishman so intolerably superior to all foreign things, and so needlessly deprecatory of his own. The criticism refers to that class of Englishman who is able to travel on the Continent, and to betray his feelings positively. But is it always noticed how true the criticism is of the

* The Hercules Promontory of Ptolemy of Alexandria. I cannot enter into long historical discussions—but Hartland is full of interesting facts and legends concerning folk like Hercules, Arthur, Alfred, Harold.

Englishman at home, down to the lowest strata of society? An old lady at Appledore was telling me one day of the glories of her home by the river-side. Then she pulled up, and added quite inconsequently, in a bright unemotional way, "Them as comes yer likes it better'n we does ourselves, bein' used to it," in which statement she entirely and deliberately confuted her argument. The West Country people disguise their devotion to their own homes by indulging a contempt for everybody else's. I once told a woman she was very lucky to live at Topsham. "I don't see where the luck comes in," she said promptly. But presently she added, "I dare say there's worst places to live in than Topsham." That is the highest praise you are ever likely to hear. And yet, probably, nothing would induce that woman to live anywhere else. My friend at Hartland said with some pride, "I've been away, but mother doesn't move much"; which reminded me of an old soul I knew at a farm on Dartmoor, who had not walked the two miles to her neighbouring village for fifteen years (the last time being the occasion of her youngest daughter's christening)—and this for no reason of infirmity; she preferred her own hearthside.

The first time I saw Clovelly I realized at once

that it is exactly like its photographs, but that nevertheless I had entirely misconceived it. A picture may portray a special scene with accuracy, but it cannot include its setting; and at Clovelly the setting is of paramount importance. Everyone is familiar with the picture of the little paved street—so steep that the chimneys of one house are level with the bedrooms of the next, so narrow that each cottage peers into the windows of the house across the way. Everyone knows the gay tiny gardens, fragrant with jessamine and honeysuckle, decked with geraniums and fuchsias; and the donkeys, and the sleighs, and the steps; and how the street corkscrews to the sea. But you will never realize from a picture that round the corner on the right, at the top of the little street, the paved way still mounts upwards; and that, when you do reach the road, you are still more than three hundred feet below the highway at Clovelly Dykes—a British camp, seven hundred feet above the sea. Clovelly is sunk more deep beneath the hills, and hidden more cunningly among the woods, than ever a picture can tell. The char-à-bancs have found it out, of course, and the street is full of caterers; but despite the stream of visitors that come there in the summer, Clovelly

is still cut off from the world. I feel that particularly. The houses and the people of Clovelly are in nowise degraded to the state of exhibits in a World museum, like the old cities of Italy. They are leading a purposeful life. If you like to go and see them doing it, you, and the commerce you bring with you, are kindly welcome; but they are not acting a play for your benefit; the sleighs and the donkeys are not stage properties, nor are the fairy-like gardens so much scenery. I think Clovelly is almost the only famous place I ever saw which has not been over-praised. It is narrower, steeper, higher, older, than ever I pictured it. It has been rebuilt, of course, but it has not suffered therefrom; for the new houses have followed old designs, without in the least masquerading as antiques—witness the candid dates upon their foreheads.

Walking down Clovelly street is much harder than walking up it; but you must go down, for at the bottom is the fish market, and the pier, and from the pier a wonderful view of the village. Here the cliffs are grandly tall, and they have lost their grimness. They are not jagged or menacing, but broad and solid, the whole magnificently clothed in trees, and festooned with luxuriant vegetation.

See Clovelly now, scrambling up the cliff among the trees! Dickens in one of his extravagant phrases has caught the illusion neatly. "One might have fancied it was out a-bird's-nesting," he says, "and was (as indeed it was) a wonderful climber."

If, instead of English trees, the deep green beauty of the umbrella pine grew on these northern shores, they would compare, not to their disadvantage, with the cliffs of the Italian Riviera. I would not have it so, for the pine is evergreen, and what would become of Clovelly in her glory at the fall of the year? To-day was early autumn, and the whole mountain of trees was golden, clambering up into the pallid sky, and brimming down the cliffs over a wall of red-glinting rock in the wide embrace of Barnstaple Bay.

Tuesday.—The buildings of Bideford are all modern; but I find it pleasing. The quay, and the river, and the ships—these are not new; and the people are thoroughly Devonshire, and not remotely sophisticated. I slept here last night in apartments romantically old and dark and stuffy. The only window in the room where they fed me opened on an interior passage. In another deep, low-ceilinged room, a lot of sailors were playing

CLOVELLY FROM THE HOBBY DRIVE

cards with a fat foreign-looking woman. It was exactly as it should have been. The years dissolved suddenly in that dim smoky atmosphere. I could fancy the sailors (with gold in their ears, and Quezal feathers in their caps) were talking of the treasures of the Spanish Main, and the deep forests, where Indians glide and gaudy parrots are screaming. And just across the way was the river and the quay, where the proud ships were lying, so comely in their smart brown rigging, so lovely against the evening sky. For what port were they bound on the morrow—"Whither, O splendid ship . . .?" I hoped it might be Nombre de Dios. Nor was that hope so unreasonable; Bideford ships still venture far.

Bideford Bridge and its story are famous; but, nevertheless, I must recall the pleasing tale as Prince has written it.

In olden times the breadth and roughness of the river at Bideford "was such, as did often put people in jeopardy of their lives, and some were drown'd, to the great grief of the inhabitants. To prevent which great inconvenience, some did divers times and in sundry places begin to build a bridg, but no firm foundation, after often proof, being to be found, their attempt in that kind came to no

effect. At this time Sir Richard Gornard . . . was parish priest of the place; who, as the story of that town hath it, was admonished by a vision in his sleep, to set on the foundation of a bridg, near a rock which he should find, rouled from the higher grounds upon the strand. This at first he esteemed but as a dream, yet to second the same with some act, in the morning he went to see the place, and found a huge rock there fixed, whose greatness argued its being in that place to be only the work of God. Which not only bred admiration, but incited him to set forwards so charitable a work. Upon this encouragement, he eftsoons with Sir Theobald Grenvile Kt., lord of the land, an especial furtherer of and a great benefactor to that design, began the foundation of the bridg where now it stands." Which, adds Risdon in his version, "for length, and number of arches withal equalizeth, if not excelleth, all others in England." Thus was the "great inconvenience" stayed.

Looking up to the bridge from the distance, on the river, is a very beautiful sight. One recognizes at once that air of peace, of welcome, and finality, which Mr. Belloc felt aboard the *Nona*.

> The Pirates of Appledore, the Wines of Instow;
> But her nose is for Bideford with the tide at the flow.

Rattle anchor, batten hatches, and leave your falls curled.
The Long Bridge of Bideford is the end of the World—
The Long Bridge of Bideford is the end of the World.

The modern Westward Ho! is not attractive; but a more romantic seascape you could not find than when these flats dissolve into the grey bay, and great white rollers advance stealthily from the mists, and a few derelict boats lie fast in the mud, sole tenants of the shrill waste about them. Then it is wonderful; but, as a rule, Westward Ho! is a place for golfers, and not for ordinary mortals. These should go to Appledore.

Appledore is lovely. It stands at the north point of the tongue of land lying between the estuary of the Torridge and the Taw and the sea. Pleasant little houses, some of them coloured pink and green like houses in Italy, line the quayside. The river flows by very fast, and all about its banks are weird-looking sands. Over the sands blows a glorious fresh air from the sea. All along the quay and the shore are seafaring gentlemen who look very little removed from their forefathers of the smuggling days.

After all, it is not so long ago that the trade was a flourishing concern. Jack Rattenbury of Beer on the south coast, "the Rob Roy of the West,"

was last caught smuggling in 1836. He had landed his cargo at Torquay—a prime thought to reflect on in these days. The same year his son was caught at Budleigh Salterton. Rattenbury was called to witness for the defence, and from his amusing cross-examination I extract the following significant reply: Mr. SERGEANT BOMPAS*: "Nobody smuggles nowaday?" RATTENBURY: "Don't they, though!" (*laughter*). That was eighty-nine years ago, within the lifetime of not a few yet living. The south of Devon degenerated to a chain of civilized watering-places a great deal sooner than the north. One may reasonably suppose, therefore, that the fathers of many of these Appledore men were plying the trade while it was still a paying concern; probably some of the older men have done a little themselves. One thing is quite certain: smuggling has only lapsed because it no longer pays. I do not think these gentlemen would have any other conceivable objection. They are the diehards of the Free Trade school; and if ever Prohibition became law in England—then, I think, the kegs of good liquor would be landed once again in the snug little coves on both shores of the county. Indeed, I have heard it whispered that

* The original, by the way, of Dickens' Buzfuz.

WESTWARD HO

even to-day . . . But that, of course, may only be gossip.

One of these good fellows rowed me over the river to Instow, a stiff pull against the tide. The glory of Instow is this, that it looks across the water to Appledore, sitting by the river's edge like a pearly water-colour by Turner, who was born near by, at Barnstaple.

Barnstaple is a considerable place, and really of great antiquity; but nowadays there is not much to see there. A church with a leaning spire, a fine old bridge, the Chapel of St. Anne, "Queen Anne's Walk"—not much beside. Queen Anne's Walk is a graceful thing. It is a kind of public loggia by the riverside, originally an exchange for merchants, and renamed when rebuilt in the reign of Queen Anne. Her Majesty's statue stands upon it. Underneath is preserved the Barnstaple Tome Stone on which the business transactions used to be made. The date of the stone is 1663. In 1826 it was removed, and lost for more than seventy years—one of the many public treasures which have been lost and found again. The village cross at North Bovey lay in a brook for more than a hundred and fifty years, thrown there by Puritan fanatics. At Buckfast they have found a great

part of the figure of the Madonna belonging to the original Abbey. At St. Nicholas Priory, Exeter, there is the shaft of the Saxon cross, restored after nearly four centuries of degrading adventure. For nearly two hundred and fifty years it was built into the bridge which spanned the Exe until 1778. For a hundred and thirty years after that, it was the corner-stone of a house in High Street. But the finds can never compare with the losses. Barnstaple ought to be a beautiful town, and it is not.

From Barnstaple the obvious track to follow was the road to Ilfracombe and Lynton. But I was due at Dulverton, and in any case I did not feel like facing the climb to Lynton. I had done that both by train and by car, and mercifully I was forewarned of its difficulties.

Ilfracombe, recently a village, is now a famous resort, with concert parties and what not. But it certainly possesses superb rock scenery. The spectacular cliffs of North Devon do not gain their grimness only from their colour, though the hard black rock has a personality different indeed from the gleaming chalk of the East Devon cliffs, and the friendly glowing sandstone of the south. The essential difference lies rather in the shape of the

cliffs. In the south they run in broad graceful sweeps between each moulded headland, and though the rock falls often in a clitter about the base of the cliff, there are no grotesque excesses. In the north, the cliffs jut out in a grand confused succession, their faces smashed by the storms and carved fantastically—a chain of wicked headlands and tumultuous little bays. These are the cliffs you find about Hartland and at Ilfracombe—as different from those in the south as an oil painting is from a water-colour. There is also a far greater variety to be found on the northern coast. These savage headlands are not so frequent as they are memorable. More often the hills sweep down boldly to the sea, still wearing their coats of short pale grass; fine handsome tongues of land—dangerous maybe, but not with cruel faces. About the mouths of the Taw and Torridge the cliffs give way altogether to miles of downs and sandbanks, with which Slapton Sands and Dawlish Warren are insignificant. These parts used to be famous for their wrecks. Morte Point, the northern extremity of Barnstaple Bay, is supposed to have been given its significant name by the Normans. It has always lived up to its title, though not always honestly. "Give a Cape a bad name and exploit it," was the

principle of the good people of Morthoe; and accordingly they pursued with great zeal a profitable trade in wrecking and piracy.

I have one very dramatic memory of Ilfracombe on a wet stormy evening in September. I stood on the Capstone Rock, the wind whistling by me, the sea fretting itself to foam at my feet. The sky was bound from side to side with a thick black canopy of cloud, but on the far western horizon the curtain was lifted to display a narrow strip of the heaven beyond. It was a bright primrose colour, and across its face tiny black clouds were slowly sailing. By virtue of a long experience in Christmas cards and calendars I had learned, of course, among many other hopeful maxims, that "every cloud has a silver lining"; but never till that moment did I fully realize that, if only we could press our faces through the night that covers us four days in seven, we should find, beyond, the sunset, calmly performing its evening spectacle to a vast auditorium of woolly clouds.

One other thing I shall remember of Ilfracombe. I hired a car to drive to Lynton for the sum of thirty shillings, after being told by two other firms that forty shillings was the correct and minimum charge. A difference of 25 per cent. in the same

ILFRACOMBE

town throws an interesting light on the fascinating study of how some people make their money.

It would be very difficult to spoil Clovelly; you could not very well build an hotel there, for instance. At Lynton and Lynmouth you can and do build hotels, in large quantities; but I never saw a place so little troubled by them. The beauty of these two villages—one perched on the cliff edge, the other far below at the river's mouth—is not to be compared, I think, with any other place in the county—hotels and all.

It is true that the Valley of Rocks itself is not nearly as impressive as Tavy Cleave. Here there is no river, and the valley is less deep; nor can it pretend to that silence of desolation which dwells on the moor. But if there is here no spectacle so magnificent as the flanks of Ger Tor streaming down to the river, Tavy Cleave has nothing so dramatic as the Castle Rock. You see it as you walk down from Lynton, thrusting its head up sharply and defiantly in the centre of the valley, which runs parallel to the sea. Really Castle Rock is an extension of its northern wall, and is itself the face of a precipitous cliff, dropping sheer to the water; but this, because of the curve of the valley, you do not immediately realize. On top of Castle Rock

there is a small level space, to which you may climb with some ease, and watch the sea throbbing far beneath you.

In this Valley of Rocks John Ridd came to consult with the witch, Mother Meldrum ; and it was from Castle Rock that he hurled the murderous goat into the sea. I never liked John Ridd the better for doing that.

Along the face of the cliff, back to Lynton, there runs a narrow path. Above, the rocky wall mounts up to build the northern flank of the Valley of Rocks ; below, it drops sharply to the sea. I think the lonely grandeur of this walk is more thrilling by far than the famous valley from which it leads ; and soon you may gaze over the sea at the massive beauty of Countisbury Foreland, painted in delicate pink and grassy green, like a beautiful pastel.

You can slide up and down the face of the rocks between Lynton and Lynmouth in the cliff railway—a convenience to be used by all means on return journeys—but unless your legs refuse their office, you ought to clamber down the hill beside the West Lyn River, dashing through the woods to meet her sister just above the village. You can enter these woods for some small fee and watch the cascading waters. I remember I embarrassed

the man at the gate by asking him what there was to see within. After a little thought he replied, "Oh, just scenery."

The noisiest Dartmoor rivers have calmed themselves long before they glide into the sea at Dartmouth, or Teignmouth, or Barnstaple. But there is no level country between Exmoor and the sea. It rises to its full height straight from the shores; and the Lyn rivers leap down the fourteen or fifteen hundred feet that separate them from the sea with incredible despatch, so that at Lynmouth the river rages by, as wide as small rivers usually are at their mouths, but with the tumultuous manners of a mountain stream. Lynmouth is the dramatic climax of Exmoor.

All down the last reaches of the torrent, the little houses lean over the water. Sometimes, after heavy rains, great boulders are washed down; and when these block the passage of the river, then the nearest houses are flooded in a trice. All day long the air is loud with the singing of the river. How they sleep there on its banks is a mystery; at night the music of the waters must grow to the booming of an orchestra.

As I was leaning over one of the smaller bridges here, I understood clearly enough how running

water is the touchstone of art. A man is not capable of reproducing the beauty of running water in actual terms. It is clearly impossible. But unfortunately he can get very near it; and hence those many entirely uninspired pictures of the moors and rivers. They are, indeed, wonderfully good attempts to reproduce this thing; but they just fail—as they must. That is photography. In creative art no attempt is made actually to reproduce the subject; but rather to catch the spirit, and then, in that spirit, to create. Only the creative artist can make water move on canvas. . . . But I have digressed somewhat. I was at Barnstaple, and deciding *not* to go to Ilfracombe and Lynton.

I took the South Molton road, a splendid waving road through typical, beautiful country. South Molton must be the most somnolent town in the county. It boasts a central square, and a town-hall of some magnificence, wherein a hunt ball sometimes awakes ghostly echoes. The rest of the year it spends recuperating.

On the way there I passed through Swimbridge and Filleigh. Swimbridge was Jack Russell's parish for many years. This famous hunting parson has long ago become a county tradition. I do not doubt vague legends of him will linger—and

multiply—till his name is as old as Francis Drake's to-day. He had advertised once for a curate "of moderate and orthodox views." The sexton was asked by a man of lesser intellect to define "orthodox." "Well," he said, "I reckon it means he must be a purty good rider." In the long run it probably did. At Swimbridge there is a very good screen, and a wonderful stone pulpit, coloured and carved.

The road is very lovely at Filleigh, where it twists past Lord Fortescue's odd mansion, Castle Hill. Crossing through the park it passes over two streams, and over these the beeches leaned, some still green, and others red. Everywhere the rooks were chattering confusedly.

After South Molton the road grows more and more attractive, with little rivers to cross, and the music of hidden streams to hear, and many desirable things to see. To the south of the road are moors; to the north lies a long valley, and beyond it is the first slope of Exmoor. Soon I left the main road for a very ill-conditioned lane. Here it had been raining; it was raining; and I rode through lakes and rivers of recent origin—and through some which crossed the path in their normal courses. And then I rode through the

darkness as well, till I had crossed the boundary of the county, and was at Dulverton, at all times a comforting place and supremely beautiful; and doubly so after forty miles on a bicycle, drenched and weary.

Thursday.—Yesterday I spent recuperating. To-day I started at 10.30 for Bampton Fair. Three miles from Dulverton the road crosses the Exe, and enters Devon. Bampton is two and a half miles beyond, on the other side of a steep hill, round which the river flows, but over which the road must climb. Near the top I could look back to Dulverton, lying between those rounded hills, whence you can see northward to the Severn sea, and through the Sidmouth gap to the English Channel—in fine weather a command of forty miles. To-day there hovered on these hills a lurid brightness, and the heights rising towards Exmoor faded suddenly into ink-black clouds. As I looked, a great flash of lightning sped across the darkness, and the thunder pealed loudly. All about me the clouds were a dirty grey, but ahead was bright blue sky.

As I started downhill towards Bampton, I passed some ponies and sheep already purchased at the sales; and soon I was at the Fair itself. Above

the station the lighter entertainments of the day—the shooting-galleries, cocoa-nut shies, and merry-go-rounds—were gathered in a field. Outside, along the hedges, were the close, stuffy tents of Madame Elise and Signora Futuro, clairvoyants and tellers of remarkably good fortunes; and close by were the ladies themselves, bewitchingly gowned and hung with jewels. One of them (with a cross-eye) would have told anybody's fortune then and there, had they shown the least sign of yielding to her importunities, which she shouted across the road with embarrassing abandon.

Below the station Bampton straggles on—one long street with an abrupt rectangular bend near the top. From end to end it was full of jostling crowds of farmers, and maidens, and fresh young men, all in their best, with their leather gaiters twinkling; everyone chattering in knots at the corner, and hailing their friends across the way, or squandering reckless money at the stalls that lined the street. Here they all were—the rings, and ribbons, and handkerchiefs, and balloons; the gingerbread and the sweets; and the only genuine unbreakable rubber ball. And canaries there were, which flew in the air with tails deliciously revolving in their sockets, yellow and blue and green—and

direct, moreover, from Japan. And there, too, were the baffling side-shows, where I noticed especially that infuriating trick in which one has to knock down a peg with a ball on the end of a string. Easy it is in the telling, and easy it would be in the performance, if the showman did not discreetly lean upon the table, deflecting the ball from its course.

High above the babble rose the voices of those who had other things to sell. The gentleman who had positively to dispose of five hundred packets of Doncaster Butter Scotch, which he was practically giving away for nothing, had the loudest voice. But his own indisputable honesty was his principal theme, and a dull one, and he had not that mastery of back-chat which distinguished the conversation of the two gentlemen sitting in a motor-car, surrounded with jewellery. I met many of their type that day, and the way they attracted and held their crowds was finely done. As a rule, they would put "genuine gold sovereigns" into a hat with the declared intention of turning them into rabbits; or else Treasury notes would be offered on what looked like a safe wager. The crowd having collected, the trick was set aside unperformed, and the business of selling began. But

CASTLE ROCK, LYNTON

for fear the crowd should depart when they saw they had been hoaxed, valuable articles were now given away free. I myself received a handsome farthing set on a ring for the watch chain. Then the bidding began, and still the generosity of these good-hearted fellows was unabated. A razor was knocked down at six shillings, and the money was restored to the astonished purchaser. "Give the gentleman back his money, Tom," the auctioneer would say. "I'm in for a square deal, I am." And so confidence grew and was fostered, till finally a rare market was created for gold watches and diamond pendants, which yielded no little profit to the gentlemen in the car.

There were a dozen other mountebanks, all advertising their wares by similar devices. Once I thought I really was going to see a good conjuring trick. It had gone so far that the rabbit, or whatever it was, was just about to be discovered in the bag which held the golden sovereigns; but no, it was a corn cure. One fat little man greatly delighted me. He had a most attractive instrument, which he whistled into with his nose to the accompaniment of a harmonium. If the purchaser found his device to be a fraud, they had their remedy, he said; they might kick him all the way to the

station. A fine manly declaration, of which no one took an unfair advantage.

The cattle and the sheep and the ponies were being sold further down the town; and so it happened that every few minutes, with sudden cries of "Ay! ay! ay!" from the drovers behind, the crowds must scatter and ram themselves into doorways and corners, as a string of scared little ponies came scuttling up the street; or a flock of sheep passed through the crowd with bewildered bleatings; or with ugly horns probing to left and right, the cattle came blundering by.

There is plenty of amusement to be found at the Fair, but the best show of all, and the *raison d'être* of the whole, is the Exmoor ponies, which are auctioned in a little sale ring at the orchard at the far end of the town. Lovely little creatures they are—with blunt noses and rough curly coats. They live out on the moor the whole year through, and the little ones, now surrounded by crowds of shouting men, have very probably never been so near a single man before, let alone a mob. They are terrified, and rush round the ring, or else stand stock still, with wild eyes staring. The ones I saw were going for thirty shillings each. The average height of an Exmoor pony is $12\frac{1}{2}$ hands, and these

baby things here were no bigger than large dogs. Very strong, and active as cats, they take a deal of looking after. A pony less than four feet high has been seen to jump from a pound five and a half feet high. To see these little fellows all clustered together in a pen, or trotting swiftly along the road one behind another, is a very delightful sight. Best of all I like their blunt noses.

It was in the orchard that I met Old Billy Fair Play, and played with him at a horse-racing game. Each time I backed the white, Old Billy Fair Play's pointer indicated black. So I withdrew, discomfited, and went to look at Bampton Church. It was surprising, at this purely country Fair—for there were not many strangers there—to see how many had withdrawn to the peaceful silence of the church. There is a cruelly damaged screen here; and the rood-loft staircase may still be seen. I found the width and the lowness of the chancel very attractive to look upon. In the churchyard there are immense and splendid yews.

Presently I returned to the loud street again. Doncaster Butter Scotch was still the prevailing note in the northern quarter; but lower down the street, the confusion was becoming concentrated by reason of impending local election results. All

sorts of rumours were abroad: "'Th' old man's out." "Well I never." "Didn't I say?" "Garn." "E's in." "'Oo told 'ee?" And from one accounted to be somebody: "I knawed it ud be so; I says this mornin', 'e's in, I says; mark my words, 'e's in." There were also a lot of excellent jokes to be made at such a time, until the latest "Ay! ay! out th' way" would furrow a dangerous channel for a drove of young bullocks.

The afternoon was drawing in and it was time to be leaving Bampton; and by the good fortune of a happy meeting I was able to do so by car, with the push-bike, which had served me so well, strapped on behind.

All the way from Bampton to Exeter both the railway and the road follow the course of the river closely; and how glorious the Exe Valley is! At first the hills rise steeply on either hand, covered this October day with the misty tops of yellowy-brown trees turning to red. Often the trees on the lower slopes had been recently felled, and the sunset was tinting the boles of the trees that remained. A forest clearing is a noble thing when the sea of waving branches is cloven, and the great trunks of the woods are exposed, tall and straight, grey and purple and silver. The beauty

ON THE WEST LYN, LYNMOUTH

of a tree, and the beauty of a wood are quite separate; and when, from a short distance, you see the tree standing against the background of the tree-tops, you have seen, at once, two perfect things.

At Tiverton the road crosses the river, and from the bridge you look along the shining water to where the church stands by the green banks. Here John Ridd was educated, at Blundell's; and so was Blackmore, his creator; and Archbishop Temple; and Jack Russell; and Bampfylde Moore Carew. Carew was born at the end of the seventeenth century, the son of the Rector at Bickleigh, four miles further down the river. He ran away from school, and joined the gypsies, and thenceforward led an amazing life of fraud and imposture, in virtue of which he was elected King of the Gypsies in succession to Clause Patch. Finally he was arrested, and transported to America to work on the plantations. He escaped to the Indians, wearing an iron collar riveted about his neck. Later he worked his way back to England, but was impressed for the Navy, and travelled all over Europe. On his return home he was again transported. Again he escaped, and a second time found his way back to England. Where and

when he died appears to be a mystery. The books on Devon give widely divergent dates and places. Perhaps (great actor that he was) he found it convenient, from time to time, to die in different places.

Six or seven miles from Exeter the valley begins to broaden out, the hills melt away, and the far widening plain grows misty with a cloud of elms. In summer-time the elm is an oppressive tree, but in October it catches all the brightness of the year. The olive and the lifeless brown of the oaks and sycamores, this is the background of autumn. The colours of autumn are the fluttering leaves of the wan lime; the gold, the bronze and the red of the beeches; and the chestnut fans, splashed with bizarre decay. But the lightness and brightness of autumn is the delicate pale yellow of the elm, which paints each little leaf separately, shaking about itself a parti-coloured gown, spangled at once with green and yellow, lightening and softening the daring tints around it. When we left the Exe at Topsham, the elms were standing like pale phantoms, their leaves draped with the evening mists. Soon we had left them behind, and were climbing over the shoulder of the moor, where the firs lift their blue peaks in deep ghostly avenues.

And then the road sank beneath the hill, into the valleys again; and lights in the little town were twinkling, and I could hear the waves breaking on the beach below the sandstone cliffs. The adventure of two hundred miles and more was over.

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